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ABSTRACT

This document is a set of two volumes that contain prize-winning newspaper articles and summaries of radio and television shows selected as part of the Media Resource Project on Literacy. Items in the 1988-89 book include the following: "Why Daddy Can't Read" (Sally L. Gilman); "The Triumph of Jimmy Sanchez" (Sandra Macias); "Illiteracy: Mississippi Yearning" (Sharon Wertz); "Florida Business Hobbled by Worker Illiteracy" (Dory Owens, Ed Lopez); "Literacy Series" (Jody Becker); "The Critical Years" (Linda Lenz et al.); "Human Capital: The Decline of America's Work Force" (Elizabeth Ehrlich et al.); "The Literacy Hoax" (David Montgomery); "The Education Crisis: What Business Can Do" and "Saving the Schools: How Business Can Help" (Nancy J. Perry); and "The Unteachables" (Jane Juska). Items in 1987 book are the following: "Savvy Reader Series" (Ron Goldwyn et al.); "Feature on Illiteracy" (Muriel Cohen et al.); "The Silent Handicap...Illiteracy" (Fred Brown, Carmen Carter); "Series on Illiteracy" (Bill Hetland); "Literacy Challenge Series" (Clay Kallam); "Illiteracy Special Report" (Tom Kisken); "Prisoners of Print" (Mark Sauer et al.); "Illiteracy's Cycle of Despair" (Deb Kollars, Gretchen Kell); "Illiteracy in Kentucky" (Mary Ann Roser, Judy Jones Lewis); "Series on Dropouts" (Betty Cork); "16-Part Series on Illiteracy" (Kari Fluegel); "Making the Grade" (AJ Tompkins, Gil Hollingsworth); "Can't You Read the Signs?" (David E. Green); "Illiteracy Focus" (Roger Nelson et al.); and "Literacy Series" (Audrey Coleman). (KC)

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THE BEST OF THE LITERACY BEAT

1988 - 1989

THE BEST OF THE LITERACY BEAT

1987

EWA

Prizewinning Articles from a contest sponsored by the
Media Resource Project on Literacy
of the Education Writers Association.
Made possible by a grant from the
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Education Writers Association
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
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About the Media Resource Project on Literacy

The Best of the Literacy Beat is part of the Media Resource Project on Literacy, a project operated with funds from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The purpose of the Media Resource Project is to encourage reporters to take a more critical and comprehensive look at literacy. Other activities of the project include a newsletter, *The Literacy Beat*; regional seminars; an information clearinghouse; and commissioned papers by Michael Moss of *New York Newsday* ("Reporting on Literacy: Soft-Selling a Complex Political Story"), Jonathan Kozol ("What the Candidates Have Not Been Saying"), Irwin Kirsh, Ann Jungeblut and Donald Rock ("Reading Newspapers: The Practices of America's Young Adults"), and Elizabeth Stage ("Can We Stand and Deliver? Mathematical Literacy in the Workplace").

About the Education Writers Association

The Education Writers Association (EWA), is a professional association of education reporters. EWA was organized in July, 1947 by a group of education reporters covering the annual convention of a national education association in Cincinnati. An editorial appearing in The Cincinnati Enquirer on July 9 stated that "the newspapermen and women who are organizing the Education Writers Association feel that ... the reporting of school news requires just as much specialized expertness as the reporting of political, sports or police news." The editorial went on to say, "There is a definite place for an Education Writers Association, and we have nothing but wishes for success for the men and women who have brought about its organization."

The news of education is as important as it ever was, and it still remains the purpose of the Education Writers Association to work for the improvement of education reporting to the general public. The organization has grown considerably since 1947. EWA has more than 600 members in most of the states, Canada and Puerto Rico. Active members include reporters from print and broadcast media. Associate members include writers and information officers for organizations, school districts, and colleges and universities.

The Education Writers Association serves the cause of education writing and its members in a variety of ways. We conduct an annual national seminar and business meeting each spring where the most important educational issues of the day are discussed by some of the leading figures of the day. Regional workshops and special seminars are scheduled to serve the specific needs of members. There is an annual awards competition to honor the best education writing, and thousands of dollars are awarded to winners. EWA publishes a newsletter six times a year to keep members regularly informed about the organization and events affecting members.

The organization has taken on a number of special projects recently. These include a resource project for reporters on literacy issues, the development of a tabloid newsletter focusing on effective programs for early adolescents, and two investigatory reports, one on the status of school building and maintenance, and the second on young adults in their first jobs.

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The Best of the Literacy Beat

Sponsored by the Education Writers Association, articles and broadcast segments in **The Best of the Literacy Beat** were chosen from among entries submitted in four categories: publications over 75,000 circulation; publications under 75,000 circulation; radio; and television. Entries were published or broadcast between January 1, 1988 and October 15, 1989.

Judges for the 1988-1989 Best of the Literacy Beat were:

Jay Ambrose	executive editor, *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, CO
Jean Sharley Taylor	former associate editor, *The Los Angeles* (CA) *Times*
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Steve Gray	editor, *The Evening News*, Monroe, MI
Robert Hively	president, *The News-Sentinel*, Knoxville, TN
Don LeBrecht	National Association of Broadcasters

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1989

Sunday Eagle-Tribune

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Why ~~Johnny~~ Daddy can't read

At age 30, he learned to read

WINDHAM, N.H. — For years, George Anthony Jabour hid his secret well.

He says it was not difficult to do.

"Everyone liked me and loved me," said Mr. Jabour, 30. "I faked them out."

Mr. Jabour is a Methuen High graduate. What few people realized, however, is that until last year, he could not read.

"I was very clever ... I hid it pretty good," he said.

Mr. Jabour is a cross-country truck driver. He said as long as someone wrote down the name of his destination and major cities on the way, he could go anyplace.

> "My son would come to me and say 'Read this.' He could read his book and I couldn't."
>
> **George Jabour**

"In a restaurant, I knew enough of the menu to get by," he said. "I could find the meat and pick something out. At work, there was always someone around to help."

Mr. Jabour is not typical of the population that cannot read.

While most tend to be poor and live in the city, Mr. Jabour and his wife, Karen, own their own home on Cobbetts Pond.

Mr. Jabour is also exceptional in other ways.

He admitted he could not read and went for help.

He says his wife had urged him for years to learn to read. But it was his son, George Jr., 8, who finally made him end the deception.

"My son would come to me and say 'Read this.' He could read his book and I couldn't," said Mr. Jabour.

"My son wanted me to read to him."

Please see JABOUR, A8

Sunday
Eagle-Tribune

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Why ~~Johnny~~ Daddy can't read

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1989

JABOUR, A8

No one knew he could not read

Jabour From A1

Mr. Jabour went to the Adult Learning Center in Lawrence for help.

He started out in a classroom with other people. When he showed more initiative, he was matched with a private tutor.

He now reads at a fifth grade level.

"George reminds me of Rip Van Winkle who has been asleep. From the time he graduated from high school he never picked up a book. He was able to get by because he was a good listener," said Marge Hesse of Salem, N.H., Mr. Jabour's tutor.

Mr. Jabour says he should have learned to read 22 years ago.

"By ninth grade, I thought it was too late," he said.

He then got into the work release program at Methuen High. He studied until 11:30 a.m. and then left class to work in his family's construction business.

He says he got through school with C's and D's.

"My English teacher used to stand over my shoulder in my senior year and help me quite a bit," he said.

He says he survived because he always found people willing to help.

Mr. Jabour said he is glad he decided to help himself.

"It took a lot of personal effort," he said. "Before I could not read blueprints. Now I can."

Sunday
The Eagle-Tribune

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1989

30,000 in Valley are illiterate

By Sally Gilman
Eagle-Tribune Writer

LAWRENCE — It is believed that more than 30,000 adults in Lawrence and surrounding communities are unable to read these words.

"The problem is immense," said William Arvanitis, who runs the Lawrence Adult Learning Center. "It is much greater than anyone can understand."

It is also troubling.

Illiterates cannot fill out a simple job application, follow directions on a bottle of medicine or read a street sign.

Non-readers cannot help their children with homework or read them stories.

They seldom vote.

Special report

More stories on the Valley's illiteracy problem appear on Page A8. They cover:

- **How to teach someone to read.**
- **How you can help.**
- **Where to go if you need help.**

They also can hurt the Merrimack Valley's economy. Illiterates tend to rely on welfare and unemployment compensation.

The city has spent millions of dollars trying to fight illiteracy.

But the battle is being hampered by a number of problems, according to those involved:

THE PEOPLE WHO NEED the most help are not getting it. The federal government wants results from its literacy dollar so the emphasis is on undereducated people who can be quickly trained and employed. This process is called "creaming" — because it skims off the people who need the least help, leaving behind the vast pool of the uneducated.

A CONFUSING NETWORK of services makes it hard to find — or give — help. Services lack coordination and often duplicate each other as rival agencies compete for money. A five-year plan that was intended to coordinate the effort has been on the shelf for a year.

MONEY TO FIGHT illiteracy is decreasing because of state and federal cuts, increasing the rivalry among agencies.

Officially, illiterates include not only those who cannot read or write at all but also those who have poor basic skills and workers whose skills need upgrading in a changing economy.

Please see ILLITERACY, A8

Illiteracy From A1

The official definition also includes people who cannot read English, even if they can read and write in their native tongue — a definition that has caused some resentment among educated Hispanics.

Nationally, between 23 million and 27 million adults are considered illiterate.

In Massachusetts, officials estimate 1.4 million adults lack a high school diploma or adequate English skills.

CITY CAMPAIGN CENTER

Of the 1 million people living in New Hampshire, about 100,000 are considered "functionally illiterate," according to Art Ellison, supervisor of the Department of Education's Adult Basic Education office.

Lawrence is the center for the literacy campaign in the Lower Merrimack Valley. It provides services for 14 other communities, including Haverhill.

The official estimate is that there are more than 30,000 illiterates in the 15 communities. Most are in Lawrence.

In the past two years, the city has spent $4 million to fight illiteracy.

The Lawrence School Department's Adult Learning Center and Northern Essex Community College's Lawrence campus are the major literacy players.

Between them, they controlled the bulk of the money that came into the city this year and last. The rest went to the International Institute, the Lawrence Housing Authority and several smaller groups.

Kathy Rodger is director of Northern Essex's Lawrence campus, which this year received almost $1 million to fight illiteracy.

30,000 in Valley are illiterate

CLASSES FILLED

That money helped about 1,500 people — mostly Hispanics in the English as a Second Language program.

"The January term is already filled and we have a waiting list. The best I can promise anyone is space in September 1990," Mrs. Rodger said.

Lawrence's Adult Learning Center received about $600,000 this year and also helped about 1,500 people — with free ESL, basic skills and high school equivalency courses.

"We are serving every single Lawrencian who comes through our doors looking for services. No one is turned away," said its director, Mr. Arvanitis.

The problem is that thousands more are not coming forward for help.

Mr. Arvanitis said the only way to reach the bulk of the illiterate population is through "outreach" — going door to door seeking out those who need help.

That would cost a lot of money at a time when money is tight.

Another reason that so many who need help aren't getting it is "creaming" — the result of the federal government's emphasis on training people to hold jobs.

"Only adult people with a 11th grade education are taken so they can get their GEDs and get jobs," said Tomas Kalmar, a literacy campaign consultant with the city.

But Mr. Arvanitis and others said more could be done with the money available if there was better coordination among the agencies involved.

"What is needed is that the responsible parties in the city need to coordinate efforts in a unified process to meet the city's needs — not the agency's needs," Mr. Arvanitis said.

"There should be one plan in the city for teaching ESL, adult basic education and literacy instruction and not just dole the money out to every agency that comes along."

A CLEARING HOUSE

Mrs. Rodger agrees the city needs "a clearing house" to coordinate programs and handle money.

> **"Responsible parties in the city need to coordinate efforts in a unified process to meet the city's needs — not the agency's needs."**
>
> **William Arvanitis**

But she does not think it would work because "we are all competitive and protective of our turf."

Last year, an effort was made to bring order to the confusion. A group called the Lawrence Literacy Coalition was formed to come up with a five-year plan to battle illiteracy in the Merrimack Valley.

The plan, however, sits on a shelf and the coalition is inactive.

Consultant Kalmar, who drew up the plan, blames rivalry among the agencies.

"It was a loose network of people with vested interests," said Mr. Kalmar. "With all the funding crisis, people were making sure that their own boat would stay afloat."

Meanwhile, the state has come up with its own four-year basic education plan to consolidate the "patchwork quilt" of services and "close the gap" between supply and demand.

At the same time, however, money is decreasing. last year, the city had $2.6 million for the war on illiteracy. This year, the figure was $1.5 million.

Marge Hesse's hobby is helping others learn to read

By Sally Gilman
Eagle-Tribune Writer

• SEPTEMBER 10, 1989

* * SUNDAY EAGLE-TRIBUNE

Marge Hesse says that learning to read is work.

"It is a long, tedious process," said Mrs. Hesse. "It is a lot of work, not just for the tutor, but for the student."

Mrs. Hesse, 19 Crescent St., Salem, N.H., is a fourth-grade teacher in Londonderry.

She said she got involved last year when she saw the Lawrence Adult Learning Center listed under volunteer opportunities in the Eagle-Tribune.

Mrs. Hesse is a widow with a grown family and 17 years of teaching experience.

"Some people are very good with their hands. They do crafts and they sew. I do not," she said. "I thought I really do have this one special skill. I just never thought of myself as skilled before."

Mrs. Hesse said she puts time and effort into planning lessons for her student, George Jabour of Windham.

"That is my personality and my way of doing things," she said.

Mr. Jabour said Mrs. Hesse always makes a personal effort to help him.

"When she was in Maine one weekend, she bought me a book for 5 cents at a yard sale," he said.

Mrs. Hesse writes stories for Mr. Jabour and records sections of books so he can practice between lessons.

She said she is so enthusiastic about teaching adults to read that she wants to help train other volunteers.

"I can give them some good pointers...I can take them through the process from step one," she said.

She is already lined up to train members of the Salem Women's Club.

Annette Cooke, a state legislator the club's education chairman, said that more than 25 women are interested in becoming volunteers.

"We should be in full swing within a month," said Mrs. Cooke. "I am very excited about it."

* * SUNDAY EAGLE-TRIBUNE

• SEPTEMBER 10, 1989

A8 •

Where to go to get help

Here is where to go for help in learning how to read.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING

Greater Lawrence people who speak English and want to learn to read or improve their skills can get help at several places.

☐ Lawrence Adult Learning Center — Reading classes are held days and evenings at the center, 599 Canal St. A student can also work with a tutor. Classes are free.

☐ Northern Essex Community College Lawrence Campus — Basic skills classes will be Monday and Wednesday from 6 to 8 p.m. Cost is $45.50. College office is at Lawrence Public Library.

☐ Salem, N.H. Adult Education — Evening classes are at Salem High or a tutor can be arranged. Classes are free.

☐ Derry, N.H. Adult Education — Classes are held Monday and Wednesday from 7 to 9 p.m. at Hood Junior High. Classes are free.

☐ Lawrence Housing Authority — Free basic literacy classes for city housing residents are being scheduled at the Multi-Sevice Office, 633 Essex St.

☐ Greater Lawrence Community Action Council — Basic skills classes are held Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The Lawrence Department of Training and Development, 237 Essex St. handles registration. Classes are free for eligible people.

Non-English-speaking

People who want to learn English or improve English-speaking or writing skills can get help at several locations in Greater Lawrence:

☐ Northern Essex Community College Lawrence Campus — Classes are filled and there is a waiting list for September 1990.

☐ Lawrence Adult Learning Center, 599 Canal St. — English as a Second Language classes are held in the day and evening. Classes are free.

☐ Derry, N.H. — Classes are weekdays from 7 to 9 p.m. at Hood Junior High. They are free.

☐ Lawrence Housing Authority — Free language classes are being scheduled at the Multi-Service Office, 633 Essex St.

☐ Greater Lawrence Community Action Council — English classes are weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The Lawrence Department of Training and Development, 237 Essex St., handles registration. Classes are free for eligible for people.

* *SUNDAY EAGLE-TRIBUNE

• SEPTEMBER 10, 1989 A8•

How you can volunteer

LAWRENCE — It takes time and patience to teach an adult to read.

"It is a lot different than volunteering in a soup kitchen or the Red Cross. It is really hard," said Susan Dowd, volunteer tutor coordinator for the Lawrence School Department's Adult Learning Center. "You have to put an awful lot of time into it."

She says she is up front with potential voluteers.

"In order to get an adult to improve one grade level in reading, you must put in 100 hours of tutoring," said Mrs. Dowd.

Volunteers teach English-speaking people to read and non-English-speaking people to speak and read English.

Tutors need some basic qualificiations:

EDUCATION: A high school diploma or GED is required.

COMMITMENT: A volunteer must promise to stay for nine months.

PATIENCE: About 25 percent of the students drop out. "It is not their top priority in many cases," said Mrs. Dowd.

FLEXIBILITY: It is one of the most important qualities. "A volunteer understands it is the learner's goals that we like to center on," said Mrs. Dowd.

Mrs. Dowd says people who want to become volunteer tutors attend an orientation session.

If they decide to go on, they take either a day or evening training program. Both include five sessions and train a total of 50 people.

The Lawrence training sessions are filled and the next orientation will be held after the first of the year.

A new volunteer training course is being scheduled for Haverhill, according to Jean O'Brien of the Adult Learning Center.

The orientation is set for 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 4 at Haverhill Public Library.

Reno Gazette-Journal

The triumph of Jimmy Sanchez

February 19, 1989

By Sandra Macias/Gazette-Journal

It would have been so easy for Jimmy Sanchez to just give up. Or even easier yet if he had not tried in the first place.

After all, the 39-year-old meat cutter had a good job, a nice home, a great family. Only Kathy, his wife of 11 years, knew his secret, and she made allowances to help him get through the day. Television could supply much of the rest, keeping Jimmy in touch with the world; his hustle, instincts and well-honed little tricks filled many social or work-day voids.

Why, then, did Jimmy push himself? Why did he put aside his fears, and jump through hoops or leap hurdles that most would have avoided? Why did he risk exposing his secret to friends and his children? Or to a world in which, by most yardsticks, he hadn't done too bad?

He had to. He just had to.

He just had to learn how to read.

And today, 1½ years after starting to cast away the shackles of illiteracy, Jimmy Sanchez is doing just that.

"I don't feel like I'm sitting in the back of the bus anymore," he says.

"I'm up there with everybody else.

Building courage to take the first step

It wasn't that Jimmy hadn't tried before, or that English was his second language.

He signed up for a federal job-training program in 1979, part of which was designed to improve the reading skills of illiterate adults. Jimmy was banking on it to learn how to read. Instead, he was given a book and told to do the best he could.

It was a familiar refrain.

"It reminded me of high school," Jimmy says. "They'd put me in a corner and say, 'Do what you can do.' "

What he did — like he had after 11 years of moving through the grades in California public schools — was quit.

Inside, he seethed. Jimmy yearned

See LEARNING, page 10A

Learning to read

From page 1A

for more — more than TV's news headlines or sports scores; more than what others could tell him. He wanted to know the whys and hows and whos of history, and find out for himself what was behind the political, social and economic issues swirling around him.

In spring 1987, Reno television stations aired a series of public service announcements for the Northern Nevada Literacy Council. Jimmy had seen the commercials many times, and occasionally had asked Kathy to call for information about the council's reading program.

Jimmy's quest for knowledge still smoldered, but Kathy was careful how she stoked the coals. She had long since been resigned to easing the path for him: writing the checks, filling out life's countless forms, reading the menus. And she knew of his embarrassment about not being able to read, his disappointment when the job-training program promised so much, yet delivered so little.

Still, as she often told Jimmy when he asked her to make the call: "This is one thing you need to do for yourself."

Slowly the fire built. Seeing the council's phone number flash on the television screen yet another time, Jimmy grabbed a pencil and a slip of paper and copied the number. He handed Kathy the paper and again asked her to call; again, she declined.

This time, for some reason not even clear to him, Jimmy picked up the phone and called. A woman from the literacy council took his name and phone number, and said she'd call back when a tutor for him had been found.

Jimmy waited one month, then another.

It seems a society that claims a war against illiteracy has too few volunteer soldiers to fight it.

Sunday, February 19, 1989
Reno Gazette-Journal

The triumph of Jimmy Sanchez

19, 1989

A tutor with strings attached

When the phone call finally came, it was much more than Jimmy had bargained for: His tutor, a newspaper reporter, wanted to do more than simply help him learn to read; she also wanted to write about it.

Jimmy listened to her spiel. He had waited three months for a tutor, and now he had one — with strings attached. He could say no, but what then? Another three months waiting?

"I felt cornered," Jimmy recalls.

"All I wanted to do was learn how to read. That's all. That's the only thing that was missing in my life. I could do everything else — walk, talk, everything — but I didn't know how to read."

Self doubt poured in: "What am I going to do? Am I going to get into this thing and end up having this in the paper? Then everybody will find out I can't read."

Jimmy convinced himself: "You've always lived on a fine line anyway because you don't know how to read. You've always had to hustle to get anything you wanted.

"It won't hurt to meet her and find out what her trip is."

Success comes easy at first

School for Jimmy was in a typing room at the Sparks Library. The teacher sat to his left. His book, "Laubach Way to Reading," was in front of them, opened to Lesson 1.

"This is a bird."

"This is a cup."

"This is a dish."

"This is a girl."

"This is a hand."

This was the first story Jimmy read — more, he says, than he'd ever read before.

The first sound he learned was "b," associated with the word bird. Others followed: "c" for cup; "d" for dish; "g" for girl; "h" for hand.

As he left the first lesson, Jimmy's words resounded his accomplishment:

"This is a start. We'll see how far we can go with this."

For three months, Jimmy's lessons went without a hitch.

More sounds: "J" for jumping; he read, "The girl is jumping." "S" for snake, "w" for woman, "r" for river, "v" for valley: "The river is in the valley," he read.

The sentences got longer: "The snake is in the tent. The woman yells, 'Look at the snake!' "

Jimmy learned about quotation marks, capital letters and vowels. He learned that knowing the sounds to "sh" and "th" and "ch" unlocked words like "shop" and "thank" and "children."

Flushed with success, Jimmy no longer felt like a lost cause.

Then he hit the wall.

You have to walk before you can run

In educational jargon, it's called a learning plateau, a flat place leading nowhere.

After hurdling phonics, consonants and punctuation, after discovering that reading wasn't impossible, Jimmy suddenly was in purgatory.

Old doubts returned; he was back on familiar ground, but this time the feelings were worse. Maybe he was a lost cause, a failure all along; maybe, for him, learning to read was unrealistic.

The sweet milk of reading success had curdled — along with his self-esteem.

At school, his tutor tried everything: flash cards, cartoons and newspaper headlines; games, poems and pep talks. Nothing recharged the magic.

Kathy encouraged him:

"You gotta take one day at a time. You gotta take one lesson at a time."

By December 1987, almost six months into the pro-

The triumph of Jimmy Sanchez

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gram, a frustrated Jimmy took another hard look at himself. Despite support from his tutor and his wife, Jimmy knew that he had to run this race alone:

"If I don't do it, I'm cheating myself. This is something more valuable than any paycheck, any gift I've ever gotten in my life."

Slowly, Jimmy's stumbling walk became a stride. Within a month, Jimmy started to run, sustained by a valuable lesson.

"Reading is work and it's something you gotta work with every day," he says. "You gotta take one step at a time, and then you start really walking."

Smaller text, bigger words, faster mileposts

The road stretched out before him.

But to Jimmy, Book 2 seemed like forever. His final destination, Book 4 of the "Laubach Way to Reading," wasn't even a speck on the horizon, yet.

He reminded himself: Be patient. He praised himself: Look how far you've come from Mile 0.

Jimmy received an official diploma on Feb. 29 to mark his completion of Book 2.

He beamed, knowing he owned a number of skills. He knew the short sounds for a, e, i, o, u; he knew "er" and "ir" and "ur" all shared the same sound. He had a bunch of consonant blends down pat: "br" as in bring, "dr" as in drop, "sm" as in "Smith."

The size of the text print became smaller in Book 3. Indentations marked paragraphs. Lessons emphasized the long vowel sounds, syllables, contractions, compound words, prefixes, suffixes, writing and spelling.

The mileposts came faster now.

His head swirling, Jimmy attacked words of more than two syllables. Compound words? A cinch. Multisyllables? Easy.

But contractions stopped him.

And spelling? For Jimmy, it's Goliath.

Why aren't the damn-fool words spelled phonetically? Jimmy asked. Why isn't "tough" spelled "tuff"? Why does there have to be a "no" and a "know"? Why can't "dying" be "dieing"?

Keep the language standard, the rules constant, my life would be easy, he said.

Easy or not, Jimmy graduated to Book 4 last November. It's the last and most complex of the series; compared to Book 1, it's college. Jimmy met 132 words in Book 1; he meets 408 in Book 4.

His latest book continues with vowel sounds and consonant blends, building on skills he previously learned. Full of advanced reading principles, the lessons now flow thick, like buttermilk.

"I can see I have to study harder and put in more time," said Jimmy, after his first lesson in Book 4.

"This isn't any piece of cake."

A long road lies before him

It probably will take Jimmy from six to 10 months to finish Book 4. Then, he'll be reading at a fifth-grade level.

That's still a long way from reading "War and Peace" or writing a letter to his congressman; without help, this article would be difficult for him to read.

But he has the skills to wring meaning out of letter clusters. He can pick his way through blocks of print, sound out consonants and vowels, tackle multi-syllable words.

Now Jimmy can decipher many things he couldn't read a year ago, six months into his program. A job application form, street signs, bills, the telephone book: Once mysteries, they are no more.

Jimmy studies daily, sandwiching time between family activities and his job at Sak 'N Save on Oddie Boulevard. Each Thursday morning at 8 sharp, he confronts another lesson.

And still, Jimmy says, he has more paths to travel.

He wants to get a General Equivalency Development degree and plans to enter an adult basic education program when he finishes the reading program. Jimmy's final goal is far-reaching — some might say it's little more than a dream: He wants to teach history.

But, just as he felt when he first discovered the power of reading, Jimmy Sanchez is confident and proud.

"The strangest thing is that I feel I can be anything," he says. "I can accomplish anything. The door of possibilities is open."

Yes it is, Jimmy. Yes it is.

Jimmy Sanchez winning his fight to read

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Jimmy Sanchez' morning routine probably wasn't much different than his Sparks neighbors' on June 7, 1988.

But on this otherwise ordinary summer day, something rather extraordinary was about to happen.

Standing on his front stoop, Jimmy scooped up the morning newspaper. His eyes focused on a red headline at the top of the front page: "Barkley shocks Hearns with KO."

No kidding! "I think Hearns got knocked out," Jimmy said to no one.

Back inside, Jimmy flopped down in his easy chair and flipped to the sports page. There was a photo of Hearns — on his back, in the ropes, half way out of the ring.

"Hey, Kathy, Hearns got knocked out," Jimmy yelled to his wife. The voice of the one-time boxer and hardcore sports fan crackled with excitement.

The bold, black headline said "Brawler Barkley stuns Hearns;" the lengthy article stretched to the next page.

Jimmy stared hard at the article. Too bad he wasn't a sponge, he thought. He'd soak up the article just like that. Then he'd know what happened.

But an all-too-familiar barricade confronted him: The blocks of letters, the words, stood solid and mysterious.

Jimmy glanced at Kathy in the dining room and, briefly, thought about asking her to read the article to him. Kathy, though, was busy reading the Bible. And you don't disturb Kathy when she's reading the Good Book.

Jimmy focused on the story's first word:

"I . . . I . . . ran, Iran."

He continued: "Bar . . . Bark . . . ley, Barkley, who was r . . . r . . . Kathy, what does r-a-i-s-e-d spell?"

"Sound it out," she replied.

"R . . . rais . . . ed, raised? Yeah, raised," Jimmy said, backtracking to get the gist of the sentence:

"Iran Barkley, who was raised in the S . . . S . . . ou . . th, South, Br . . . Bron . . . x, Bronx, turn . . . ed, turned . . . street . . . fight . . . er, fighter . . . in the . . . third . . . r . . . r . . . ound . . . round . . . with a . . . sh . . . sh . . . ock . . . ing, shocking, up . . . set . . . of Thomas Hearns."

> An all-too-familiar barricade confronted him: The blocks of letters, the words, stood solid and mysterious.

Cautiously he moved, much like a slow-motion instant replay of the fight itself.

One sound at a time: Break down the sounds of the letters; link the sounds together to form a word.

One word at a time: Link one word to the next; link them together to form a sentence.

Read a sentence and then re-read it. Re-read a paragraph; re-read connecting paragraphs.

Connecting words. Connecting thoughts, ideas and information.

Connecting.

"Hearns . . . cut . . . Barkley . . . over . . . the . . . eye . . . and . . . drew . . . bl . . . blood . . . from . . . his . . . m . . . m . . . outh.

"Train . . . trainer Vic . . . Vic . . . tor, Victor, Ma . . . ch . . . e . . . bo, Mach . . . — whatever — told . . . Barkley, 'We've . . . got . . . to . . . fight . . . him . . . South Bronx street . . . st . . . style."

Side-by-side with the boxers, Jimmy swung at the words:

"Hearns . . . land . . . ed, landed, about . . . a . . . doz . . . dozen . . . vic . . . vic . . . ious . . . vicious bod . . . y . . . shots. Sud . . . den . . . ly . . . Barkley un . . . lea . . . shed, unleashed, a right . . . hand . . . to . . . the . . . side . . . of the . . . head . . . that . . . dr . . . op . . . drop, dropped, Hearns . . . flat . . . on . . . his back."

Flat on his back! Wow, what a fight! Jimmy thought.

"When . . . the . . . act . . . tion, action, re . . . sumed . . ., Barkley . . . bull . . . bulled Hearns into the ropes . . . and . . . landed . . . two or three sh . . . ots, shots . . . Hearns fell . . . through . . . the . . . r . . . r . . . ropes onto his . . . gold . . . tr . . . trunks."

Jimmy looked at the clock. It was 7:30, and he'd been at it for an hour. My God, an hour!

Slowly he put the paper down. His very soul shivered; his head ached magnificently.

It was all there. The whole fight. Hearns, the Hit Man from Detroit, punching. Barkley, cut eye, bleeding mouth and all, smashing back with a right. Hearns retreating. Hearns collapsing.

Jimmy exhaled in a sudden rush of victory; he picked up the newspaper and looked at the story again.

It was all there. For the first time, he had reached in and pulled it out. And it was his.

"Hey, Kathy, I did it," Jimmy said, leaping from his easy chair.

"I read *my* sports page. I did it, I read it. Barkley won his fight. But, hey, man, I'm winning mine."

Survival skills: bluff and hustle

Sunday [illegible] 1989
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Illiteracy increases dangers on the job

For the past 16 years, Jimmy Sanchez has worked as a meat cutter, a job that demands both caution and attention to detail.

You can't relax when grinding hamburger, slicing bacon or buzz-sawing ham hocks. You can't be sloppy about packaging or pricing; you can't let old meat sit around in the displays.

And you can't mix up grades of meat or slap a T-bone label on a Porterhouse.

When you can't read, however, the danger is always there: Everything from reading the boss' instructions to labeling a loin lamb chop can be as career-threatening as a sideward glance when working with the buzz saw.

The very fact that Jimmy has made a career of meat cutting is testimony to his hustle and what he calls a "sixth sense" — a variety of mental exercises he's honed to circumvent his inability to read.

Jimmy's future in 1972 was anything but promising. A high-school dropout who couldn't read, he had specialized in surfing and Golden Gloves boxing.

Old photos show a healthy young man with an impressive physique — a washboard abdomen, sculpted biceps and muscular legs that had been developed from time on a surfboard and working out as a welterweight fighter.

Out of the water or gym, though, he stumbled; illiterates have few job choices.

So Jimmy used his back and his arms to make a buck. He worked as an iron worker and then switched to other construction, building brick walls, swimming-pool decks and fences.

But he always looked over his shoulder:

"To keep a job, you gotta work harder and faster than the next guy — because the next guy knows how to read and you don't," Jimmy says.

"I figured the boss would keep me, even if I didn't know how to read, if I produced and worked harder and longer."

At age 23, Jimmy accepted his father's invitation to go to work as a meat cutter.

With his dad as foreman, Jimmy was safe. He worked wholesale, cutting carcasses into chops, roasts and steaks.

Reading didn't come up much; Jimmy learned what words he needed to know: b-e-e-f, p-o-r-k, l-a-m-b, v-e-a-l.

He memorized them so he could put the different cuts of meat in the right packing boxes. If he became confused, he looked in the box to match the cut, ever hopeful that the container wasn't empty.

After seven years, Jimmy switched to retail meat cutting. He made the move with reservations, knowing his inability to read could cause problems.

At first it was easy. He cut meat and packed it into trays; he ground sirloin and chuck.

Soon, though, he had to face the price-code book: 30 pages with 990 items from hamburger to top sirloin to pig snouts. Then came the Hobart meat wrapper — punch keys marked with words. And brand names to memorize, an array of sausages, smoked meats and cheeses to sort out. Manuals, management instructions, customer forms, time sheets, invoices, orders. . . .

Jimmy didn't panic. He knew what he had to do:

"To survive, I remembered everything in detail. I memorized everything — words, instructions, everything."

And he bluffed. Jimmy used his wits and personality, and developed his sixth sense. Unknowing co-workers often helped. If all else failed, he could fall back on his wife, Kathy.

Today, Jimmy doesn't fake it anymore; he reads the code book, the manuals, the labels.

And no longer must he phone Kathy to spell a mysterious word to her.

Jimmy's triumph

Long-held secret of illiteracy comes out between friends

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Jimmy Sanchez and Brad Yenter had no complaints: The Lakers had beaten the Pistons, the barbecued chicken didn't burn and the beer stayed cold.

Satisfied with the world, the two friends took their dogs and their good feelings for a walk near the Carson River. The dogs skidded after wild scents, their noses quivering like Geiger counter gauges.

Jimmy sat down beside Brad on a wooden bench in a clearing: "That was some game, huh?"

"Yeah," Brad answered. "Did you *see* that impossible basket Magic made?"

As the two men talked, dusk spread a mauve blanket on the horizon; the Sierra, surrendering, wrapped itself in darkness. Cottonwoods whispered along the river bank; the cool May evening stilled.

"Boy," said Jimmy, puffing on an ancient Blackjack cigar, "this thing is going to burn up in a second it's so dry."

Brad chortled, his teeth clamped around a stogie from the same box: "They're a man's man cigar, for sure."

"Isn't it something the way Magic and Isiah are as close as brothers even though they are on different teams?" asked Jimmy, reflecting on the friendship between the Lakers' Magic Johnson and the Pistons' Isiah Thomas.

"Yeah, it's gotta be tough, playing on different teams and all. They have to mix it up. And you watch — the newspapers will make something of it. Get things stirred up," Brad replied. "They gotta sell papers, ya know what I mean?"

Jimmy thought: Now. Now, while we're talking about buddies, newspapers and stuff. I've wanted to tell him for a long time, now's my chance.

"Speaking of newspapers," said Jimmy, "they're going to write a story about me in the paper."

Brad took his cigar out of his mouth. "Oh yeah? What are they going to write about you for?" he asked, laughing at Jimmy before he took another puff.

"Because I don't know how to read," Jimmy confided.

For just a second, time stopped; silence and smoke circled above the two friends' heads. Jimmy had fired a hook shot that had caught Brad off guard.

"When you say you can't read, what do you mean?" Brad finally asked.

"Well, stuff like the, and, to, go — those kinds of words I can read," said Jimmy. "But five and six letter words are hard for me."

Brad looked at Jimmy curiously. This guy he'd known for 12 years, since the days they'd cut meat together in a Carson City supermarket, had astounded him.

Brad again was silent, puffing on his cigar; Jimmy waited for questions he hoped that Brad would ask.

Finally, one came: "How come you never learned to read?"

"Because they didn't teach me in school," Jimmy said. "They just kept passing me."

"How long did you stay in school?" Brad asked.

"Till the 12th grade," Jimmy said. "Then I dropped out."

Brad pressed on: "You mean you couldn't read, but you made it to the 12th grade?"

"Yeah," Jimmy said, matter-of-factly.

"How the hell do you do your job?" asked Brad, moving to familiar ground.

"It wasn't easy when I started," Jimmy said. "I had to observe and listen better than the next guy. I had to keep three ears open, you know what I mean? In order to survive, I developed this sixth sense."

Brad took another puff on his cigar: "Wow, man. What I want to know is why did you wait so long to learn to read?"

"It's a long story," said Jimmy. "I'll tell you about it another time."

"Why didn't you tell me about this before?" asked Brad, staring at Jimmy.

A familiar wave of shame washed over Jimmy: How could he explain to his friend why he'd hidden this?

"You don't feel good about yourself when you don't know how to read," Jimmy said with a resigned sigh.

"You don't feel like you're a whole man. I couldn't tell you before because of that and because I wasn't doing anything about it. But now I am — I've got a tutor who's teaching me to read."

Their cigars had become stubs, the ends glistening as darkness invaded the valley. Brad slapped his hands on his jeans, stood up and whistled for the dogs.

He turned toward Jimmy, then patted his buddy on the back: "Hey, man. You're going to enjoy reading the sports section a lot more now. . . ."

Family's love smooths the way

Sunday, February 19, 1989
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Chewing a yellow pencil stub, Jimmy Sanchez made a study center in his easy chair. He placed his red spiral notebook and Webster's Elementary Dictionary on the footrest; he maneuvered into the chair and opened his reading book.

Except for a purring refrigerator in the kitchen, the house was quiet at 6 a.m.

Jimmy opened the book to Lesson 3. A new word list emphasized the letter combination "ay," which makes a long "a" sound.

Jimmy rolled the sounds around in his mouth like a piece of hard candy: "Pay, May, Kay, Ray, play, away," he repeated.

He turned the page to his next challenge, the story. Reading slowly, he began:

"Today is the first day of May. Yesterday was payday. Yesterday was payday for Kay and Ray Mason. Their payday is the last day of the month. They got five hundred dollars.

"The Masons are paying their bills today. Ray is looking at the bills. Kay is writing checks."

Jimmy could relate to that; his household was organized similarly, except that his wife read the bills *and* wrote the checks. Kathy read everything related to their lives.

The hardest confession

Jimmy remembers the night — nine months after they started dating — that he told Kathy he couldn't read.

They were in his apartment kitchen, but they could just as easily have been sitting at the bottom of a swimming pool: Jimmy's words sounded garbled and unreal.

"What?" asked Kathy, trying to make sense of what he had said. "What are you saying?"

"I'm saying I can't read," Jimmy said again. "I never learned how in school."

Kathy stared at Jimmy. Then, she looked away.

Silent, she focused hard on details in the kitchen: the linoleum floor's pattern, a striped dish towel [illegible] on the counter top.

Finally, her eyes [illegible] on a chrome barometer [illegible] on a wall. "You mean you can't [illegible]

"No," said Jimmy, his heart pounding. He could feel it knocking against his chest; he felt strangely sad and defeated.

He remembers thinking, "Please God: Don't let her slip through my fingers; I love her a lot."

Kathy didn't leave.

Instead, she set about to help cushion the blows dealt daily to an illiterate adult. The kids' school notices, Jimmy's job evaluations, the array of legal documents and forms society wades through: All went to Kathy. It became second nature for her.

But as Jimmy slowly lifted the weight of his illiteracy, Kathy noticed subtle changes in her husband of 11 years. Not all were welcome.

One day, feeling particularly confident about his new skills and progress, Jimmy made a passing comment to her: "Pretty soon I won't need you to read for me anymore."

"You're right," she said, avoiding his eyes. "It's going to be different."

Jimmy was surprised. By the tone of Kathy's voice, he knew he'd hit a nerve.

He tried to soothe her: "Ah, come on, Kathy. I was only kidding."

Jimmy sensed their relationship had been strained recently, but he couldn't figure out what was wrong. Finally, he asked.

"I know this sounds funny," she replied, "but I have this kind of fear that when you can read on your own, you won't need me as much as before."

Kathy had revealed a hidden fear; Jimmy felt a sudden rush of love as she spoke.

"You're the mother of my children, Kathy," he said. "You're my wife. Why do you think I'm doing all this? To make life better for you, the children and me. I still need you, and you still need me. It's just going to get better for us."

He put his arm around her. "Hey," he said, lifting her chin, "I love you."

She nodded and smiled.

Son's acceptance makes everything OK

Kathy's doubts and his own fears of failure paled considerably, though, when Jimmy

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Family's love smooths the way

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fretted about still another demon: What if his children — Rachael, 7, and Jimmy Jr., 9 — found out that dad couldn't read?

That's one reason he studied early each morning, while they were still asleep.

One morning, last spring, Jimmy sat on the living-room couch, intently sounding out syllables. Suddenly, a voice shook him.

"Hi, Dad, whatcha' doing?"

Jimmy hadn't heard Jimmy Jr. come into the room; the boy stood in front of his father, looking at the workbook.

Too late to shove the book under a sofa cushion, Jimmy could do little but stammer: "Uh, uh, nothing, son."

"Whatcha' reading?" asked Jimmy Jr., easing onto the couch, sliding close to his dad and reaching for the book.

"This looks like what we do at school," said his son, then 8 years old and a second-grader.

A knot tightened in Jimmy's stomach; a recent chat with Kathy raced in his mind.

"What if Jimmy catches me studying?" Jimmy had asked, anticipating the moment he now faced. "What should I tell him?"

"Tell him the truth," she had said. "He's going to find out sooner or later anyway. It would be better if he hears it from you."

Jimmy looked at his son, who now was flipping through the workbook.

"This stuff's easy," said Jimmy Jr. "How come you're doing this?"

His insides flip-flopping, Jimmy answered: "I'm learning to read better. Until recently, I didn't know how to read very well."

Jimmy Jr. pressed on: "Why didn't you know how to read?"

Jimmy answered simply and honestly:

"I never learned to read in school like you are. But now I have a tutor — you remember Sandy? You met her at the newspaper once. She's teaching me to read."

Jimmy Jr. punched his dad on the shoulder: "That's pretty good, Dad."

Jimmy exhaled slowly as he watched the boy disappear down the hall.

And he thought: "Wow. I don't have to hide it anymore. It's going to be OK; it's going to be OK."

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Teacher gladly shares new reader's triumph

By Sandra Macias/Gazette-Journal

One day last summer, I watched an old man crossing Pickett Park; he was on crutches with a knapsack cinched to the handle brace.

He poked his right crutch out at an angle. Cautiously, he took a step.

Steadying himself, he pointed the left crutch out at an angle. Gingerly, as if the ground would shatter if he pressed too hard, he stepped again.

He concentrated only on the space in front of him. But every so often he'd look up to see how much farther he had to go.

As I watched the man, I thought of Jimmy.

Jimmy Sanchez, my student, began his journey into reading much the same way: crippled, unsteady, cautious. Intense and determined, he took one step at a time as if his life depended on it.

For a year and a half, I've watched Jimmy's struggles and triumphs.

I have taught Jimmy to read.

People who know about my project invariably look at me like I'm some kind of Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller's noble teacher.

I don't view myself that way; I am satisfied and proud to be part of Jimmy's breakthrough, but I don't feel noble.

Jimmy's the one who's been through so much, starting with his decision to pick up the phone and say to someone: "I can't read. Can you help?"

He's the one with the convictions — the one who felt so strongly about this project that he not only trusted my ability to teach, but let me share his story with readers.

With his incredibly supportive wife, Kathy, it became possible.

My involvement didn't start with altruism. It began when an editor asked me if I would teach someone to read, and then write about the experience. The idea was interesting and challenging, to say the least, but still I viewed it as an assignment.

And I had trepidations: It meant a huge commitment of time, and I was skeptical whether I could be both the involved teacher and an objective observer.

Something else bugged me — a sense of deja vu. I had been a teacher for 16 years before I became a reporter. I thought I'd left that behind.

So, I started the project with a just-another-assignment attitude.

And I almost blew it.

Jimmy and I initially talked on the telephone. We set a date to meet at the Sparks Library and begin his lessons.

The day before our first meeting, I called to postpone it, figuring Jimmy would understand.

"I have a heavy assignment and an editor breathing down my back," I said.

The line fell silent; then Jimmy spoke: "I've waited this long to learn to read. I guess I can wait another week."

His remark slapped me in the face. Instantly, I recognized my insensitivity. This date, the beginning of an assignment for me, meant something more for him.

So, school began, as originally planned — one-on-one, teacher-to-student, each with a specific goal in mind.

Along the way, something happened.

The more we worked, the more my objectivity cracked; the longer we toiled together, the more subjective I became.

Now, I'm Jimmy's cheerleader, rooting for him all the way; I'm his friend and confidante. Kathy and I also are friends. We talk about raising kids, the latest fashions. And Jimmy's progress.

Looking back, I realize my understanding of illiteracy was shallow. I equated it merely with obvious things, like the inability to read the telephone book, a street sign, or a grocery list.

I never thought about it in heavier terms like how illiteracy can chip away at your integrity, the pipeline to your soul.

But Jimmy taught me.

My first lesson came the day Jimmy told me that his son, a second-grader at the time, could read better than he.

"I want to catch up with my son," he said, quietly. "I'm lower than him in my reading skills."

The magnitude of this confession took my breath; I didn't know what to say. At that moment, I was too busy reacting to emotions of pity and compassion, mixed with a peculiar admiration for his courage.

I had similar feelings the day Jimmy added the name, Rachael to his spelling list.

"Here Rachael is my daughter's name and I don't know how to spell it," he said.

I had a hard time keeping my voice steady as I spelled it for him: R-A-C-H-A-E-L.

Teaching Jimmy hasn't been hard; he's a motivated learner, eager to go where I lead him.

Some days were rocky — when he didn't make much progress or bogged down. But, I was there when he made letters turn into words, scored 100 percent on a spelling test, and read a story without a stumble.

Today, I look back with a different sense than when we started.

After the first three months, I sighed heavily, and thought: God, we have a long way to go.

Now, one-and-a-half years later, I can smile triumphantly: Look how far we've come, Jimmy.

Decision changed Jimmy's life

(Editor's note: Without the cooperation of Jimmy and Kathy Sanchez, this project about illiteracy would not have been possible. Jimmy agreed to share his thoughts about learning to read and changes in his life. The following is a combination of a tape recording he made and an essay he wrote.)

By Jimmy Sanchez

To learn to read and spell is not easy for somebody who doesn't get a good education. I know and a lot of other people know. But you can do something about it and find help if you can't read or spell.

I found help from "Laubach Way to Reading," a very good friend, Sandra Macias, and the Reno Gazette-Journal, which gave Sandra time to teach me.

But it's a lot of work and lots of ups and downs.

By the way I'm Jimmy. I'm a person who thinks that if you try, you can do it. I know sometimes it's not easy, but I think about when I was young. When I was young, I learned how to box. The thing I learned was to be strong and to use everything to get by.

I found out even if you can't read or spell, you can make a decision. You can get help, young or old. People are out there to help you — if you want to help yourself.

I have very good friends who understand me and I understand them. But when I told my friends for the first time (that I couldn't read), it was hard. But it was the truth.

My friends asked me why I didn't learn how a long time ago. I tried to do it myself, but you can't because it takes a lot of years to learn how to read.

Sandra told me one time that once I learned how to read, I'd feel a lot better about myself. And I do now.

It's still hard to adjust. Sometimes I fall back on my "sixth sense" because I've always thought it was easier. But now I'm learning not to use it. I'm learning to use what I've been taught.

One reason I want to learn how to read is because my whole family — my six brothers and one sister — graduated from high school. And I want to graduate.

I also want to learn to read to better my education for myself and for my children and make it easier for my wife.

But the main thing I want to do is to educate and teach somebody else how to read after I learn how. At least I'm giving back what I've learned.

One thing I can say about not knowing how to read. When I didn't know how to read, I never felt secure in my job. And I didn't feel secure like most other people in going anywhere and doing anything or meeting other people.

But I always looked and carried myself with a lot of confidence because I had to feel, in my own way, confident.

I work and I deal with people everyday. And I see people who don't know how to read. They ask me what items are. I tell them — it doesn't hurt me to tell them — that I understand how they feel.

I'm really happy that my daughter is learning how to read. And (my son) Jimmy is doing really good — he wants to be a writer, he's written several stories now.

In fact, Jimmy and I still have to sit down and finish some little stories we've been talking about.

Several options for those who want to read

For the adult non-reader, help is only a telephone call away.

If you know someone who can't read, point them to the Reading Center of Northern Nevada, Washoe High School or Truckee Meadows Community College. Each offers specialized reading programs; all are free.

☐ The Reading Center, part of the Nevada Literacy Coalition, uses a pool of volunteer tutors from the Nevada Literacy Council. The individual student and tutor establish their own class schedule, and lessons can be given in the student's home, a library or elsewhere.

If you want a tutor — or are interested in becoming one — call 829-7323.

Adult non-readers, living in rural Nevada, should call 1-800-445-9673, NLC's toll-free number. You will be referred to the reading program nearest you.

☐ Washoe High School offers a different approach with its Adult Basic Literacy Education program.

Open to those who do not have a high school diploma, the ABLE program concentrates on reading, writing and math skills. Students work with a teacher and teacher's aide on individualized study programs in a learning center.

Classes meet three hours, four days a week; morning, afternoon and evening sessions are available.

For an evaluation appointment, call 786-7797.

Millions more have yet to learn

According to U.S. Department of Education statistics, 27 million adults in the United States cannot read beyond a fourth-grade level. That's about one-fifth of the country's adult population.

A U.S. Census Bureau report estimates that 50,040 Nevadans are illiterate; about 20,000 live in Washoe County.

Government estimates place the cost of that illiteracy at about $225 billion annually in welfare payments, lost job productivity, unrealized earnings, tax revenues and crime.

☐ TMCC's Adult Basic Education program is yet another choice.

Classes meet for 2½ hours, twice a week, in a classroom at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Sparks. Morning, afternoon and evening sessions are offered.

Each student works with a volunteer tutor, and a TMCC teacher supervises the one-on-one instruction. Before being placed in the program, each student is tested by a placement specialist.

For more information, call 673-7093.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN July 16-21, 1989

Illiteracy may be top threat to U.S. future

27 million can't read; toll to economy: $225 billion

■ See editorial, page 12A

First of a series

By SHARON WERTZ
AMERICAN Staff Writer

An insidious disease is running rampant throughout the United States. Already it has claimed an estimated 27 million victims and, despite efforts to combat it, the numbers are growing.

It is known to be carried from generation to generation, but it is not sickle cell anemia.

It cripples its victims, rendering them unemployable and exacting a shattering economic toll on society, but it is not cancer.

Illiteracy
Mississippi Yearning

Shame is its byproduct, and its victims will go to great lengths to hide it, but it is not AIDS.

It's name is illiteracy, and many experts consider it the number one threat

■ See ILLITERACY, page 14A

City has HELP for non-readers

By SHARON WERTZ
AMERICAN Staff Writer

They come from every segment of society, every age, every socio-economic group. Sex is no distinguishing factor; nor is race. But they all have one thing in common: They can't read.

They come to Hattiesburg's HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project Inc.) center because they want to learn.

"We have students who've never been to school, who've never written or learned the alphabet," said HELP director Ron Blackwell. "We just had a big burly man who finished his first Laubach book. He waved it in the air, saying, 'This is something I did! They can't take that away from me!' "

To date, more than 1,000 students have walked through the door since the HELP Center opened March 18, 1987, in the old bus station at 125 Walnut St. Some come because they want to help their children with their homework, some because they want to be able to read the Bible, some because the inability to read has embarrassed them and made them feel inferior, some because their low-level jobs are being

■ See HELP, page 14A

ILLITERACY

■ FROM page 1A

to the future of the United States.

Already it's costing the nation $225 billion a year in welfare payments, unemployment compensation and loss of business and industry to countries with a better-educated workforce. And that doesn't even take into account the toll it exacts on human dignity.

The correlation between illiteracy and crime is well documented. Seventy-five percent of prison inmates have not completed high school. With few, if any, skills to earn an honest living, most, when released from prison, will commit other crimes and return through the constantly revolving prison doors.

In Mississippi, 714,000 people age 16 and older — 45 percent of the state's population — are not enrolled in school and do not have the equivalent of a high school diploma. Almost 400,000 completed less than nine years of school. If the current trend continues, 38 percent of Mississippi children entering first grade in the fall will not graduate from high school.

Mississippi has the highest illiteracy rate in the nation, at 37 percent. State Department of Education statistics show that more than 13,300 adults over the age of 25 in Forrest, Lamar, Covington and Perry counties have attended fewer than eight years of school. Based on 1980 statistics, more than 33,000 adults — 30 percent of the population — in these four counties are without high school diplomas.

Functional illiteracy is a term tossed around loosely these days, defined fuzzily at best. Increasingly, however, it is coming to mean lacking the reading, writing and computational skills necessary to function successfully in society.

Literacy, then, is an ever-moving target, moving upward as industry is automated and business is computerized. Those who can't keep up with the technological changes are left behind. Many who never received high school diplomas — and even some who finished only the eighth grade or less — have been able to get along — so far. But some who received high school diplomas can neither read nor write.

It is clear that the level of education alone is not always an accurate measure of literacy. But it's the only one we have. By any measure, the illiteracy rate of the nation as a whole, and of Mississippi in particular, portends a nation at risk.

"When I traveled Mississippi (during the 1987 gubernatorial campaign), I saw illiteracy on a wholesale level ... what it did to cities and towns," said Mississippi's first lady, Julie Mabus. "When you see illiteracy all over a state, you ask, how could it possibly have happened? It breaks my heart when I realize what's happened over the last 100 years. You see our state in all its beauty and realize our human resource is one that's been neglected.

"I resolved," she said, "to make sure that all the people in Mississippi can be self-supporting and can read and appreciate the rich literature that we have."

Mrs. Mabus has made the fight against illiteracy her top priority, and through her founding of the Mississippi Literacy Coalition is leading efforts to address the problem.

But back to Mrs. Mabus' question, "How could it possibly have happened?"

Those who have studied the problem for many years agree that there is no single cause for illiteracy. They do know that it is an intergenerational problem — that an illiterate parent is likely to have an illiterate child, who is likely to have an illiterate child ... on and on unless the cycle is broken.

Illiteracy is not hereditary, at least not in the genetic sense. But when a child has never been exposed to people who value learning, who can and will help him with his lessons, who read and talk to him, who set an example for him by holding responsible jobs, who value hard work and encourage worthwhile goal setting, he is not likely to grow up thinking those things are important.

There are other causes. Many older adults had to drop out of school to help support the family. Some have learning disabilities, hearing loss or need glasses. Some had unsympathetic teachers early in school and became convinced that they could not learn. Some are immigrants who speak little or no English.

Mississippi's literacy took a giant step backwards when compulsory education was repealed in the late 1950s. The Education Reform Act of 1982 reinstated it; and beginning in the 1989-90 school year, the state will have compulsory education to age 16. But a whole generation of Mississippians was not required to go to school at all. It is their children and their children's children who are at risk today.

A child who enters school already behind other children because his parents have not read to him and taught him basic skills will be at a greater disadvantage with every successive grade. Unless he receives special help, his frustrations are likely to lead to behavior problems, drugs or teen-age pregnancy. He is a prime dropout candidate.

Can he be saved? What about those teen-agers who have already dropped out, who have gotten in with the wrong crowd, who are turning to drugs and crime to make them feel good? Can they be helped? Is it too late for the millions of adults who are being phased out of the workforce?

These questions and more will be explored in a special series in the American this week. We hope you will read every word of it.

As Mrs. Mabus said, "The people of Mississippi have got to understand that it (illiteracy) affects all of us. Only then will they do something about it."

NEXT: Illiterates find HELP through tutors

HELP

■ FROM page 1A

phased out.

"Last week we had the first effect in our area of the Masonite layoff," said Blackwell. "We had two come in who had been laid off and who lacked the skills to get another job."

HELP has evolved to its current status through a process of learning what the needs are and how they can best be met with available funding.

Initiated in 1984 by the *Hattiesburg American* through a $75,000 Gannett Foundation grant, HELP first opened its doors in February 1985 as a worksite computer-based learning laboratory at the University of Southern Mississippi. Equipped with four computers, the project initially was planned to demonstrate with about 16 lower-level employees that computers could be used for literacy instruction.

The first day, 40 students showed up. Before long, the number grew to 100.

In March 1986, HELP expanded to a second worksite, Forrest General Hospital, where some 40 employees enrolled.

But, although the computer-based instruction was effective for some students, it became apparent that additional approaches were needed.

"Almost immediately we discovered that really low-level students couldn't work with computers," said Blackwell, who, as a USM doctoral student in adult education, has been involved in HELP since its inception. "So we started one-on-one tutoring."

The worksite program also had other limitations. "Everybody kept asking, 'Can my brother come? Can I bring a friend?'," Blackwell said. "We couldn't do it (let them bring others not employed by USM) as a workplace program."

So, in December 1986 HELP secured a second Gannett Foundation grant, which enabled them to open the Walnut Street public access center in March 1987. When HELP was unable to fund all three centers, the USM and Forrest General centers were closed, but Blackwell said he hopes to reopen those centers, plus other worksite centers, if funding can be secured.

Tom Ross, retired after 28 years in materials management, had served for some years as a volunteer literacy tutor in Kentucky. After he moved to Hattiesburg, he volunteered with HELP, and when the center moved downtown, he became its volunteer coordinator — training, recruiting and supervising the more than 75 volunteer tutors involved in the program. Nancy Ratliff was hired as learning laboratory coordinator, completing the full-time staff.

Of the more than 1,000 students who have participated in its programs in the last two years, 50 percent read below a 9th-grade level and 25 percent read below the sixth-grade level. Lower-level students are taught by individual tutors with a combination of Laubach Learn-to-Read and other methods, while those on sixth-grade level and above receive most of their training in the computer-based laboratory.

Currently, 75 student-tutor pairs work together. Another 70 students work on individualized programs in the computer lab. But there is a critical need for more tutors. Forty students are waiting to be matched with tutors. And there could be many more.

Blackwell said, "We've really made no effort to recruit students. We have more than we can serve right now. What we need are more tutors ... and more money."

HELP tutors have logged more than 7,000 hours. Most meet with their students at least once, usually twice, a week. It is that time commitment that often makes it difficult to recruit more tutors.

"We're not talking about a few weeks or even a few months," said Blackwell. "It will take a year or even two years. That's a real problem for both student and tutor. It takes a real commitment for that length of time."

Then there's the money problem. Since the second Gannett Foundation grant ran out last year, the wolf has been constantly at the door. For a while the center had to cut back to opening only three days a week. Despite having several grants funded, it still is operating at 60 percent of its budget.

"Our staff works 50-60 hours a week," said Blackwell, "and they've worked at 60 percent of their $12,000 salary for much of the year. If we're spending all our time raising money, we can't teach."

HELP staffers have developed a literacy network for the five-county area of Jones, Perry, Covington, Forrest and Lamar counties, so that students, tutors and social agencies can know what is offered and can refer others to the most convenient services.

But many planned projects, such as development of a family literacy program and classes at the Restitution Center (rehabilitation center for young persons convicted of first offense felonies), remain on hold pending funding. A recent VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) grant will provide some relief, funding four full-time volunteers: a student advocate, a volunteer recruiter and publicist, a workplace literacy coordinator and a resource developer. Applications are being taken for these positions.

The needs are great, the hours are long and the funds are few, those who work with HELP are learning. Why do they stick with it?

"Our students are truly fantastic to work with," said Blackwell. "They have had to muster up a lot of courage to walk in that door; they are motivated and want to learn.

"When any of our staff or tutors go home at night, we feel like we have done something good. That is our greatest reward."

Hub City organization offers local assistance

1. What is HELP?

Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing adult education to illiterate and under-educated people in the Hattiesburg area.

2. How is it funded?

HELP was started and funded for its first two years by the Gannett Foundation. Since then, it has become a United Way Agency but must provide the balance of its funding through federal and state grants and local contributions. It is in desperate need of funding if it is to keep its doors open.

3. Who can get assistance from HELP?

Help is available to any adult in the Hattiesburg area who feels he or she needs to improve reading and writing skills. HELP students come from 13 South Mississippi counties but are primarily concentrated in Forrest, Lamar, Covington and Perry counties.

4. How can I get HELP?

Go to the HELP center at 130 Walnut St. in Hattiesburg or call 583-2233.

5. What qualifications do I need to be a HELP volunteer tutor?

All it takes is the ability to read, patience, a caring heart and a willingness to devote at least one or two hours a week for up to two years to teaching your student. Volunteers must take 2½ hours training in the Laubach Learn-to-Read program.

6. What will I get out of being a HELP tutor?

Tutoring provides the opportunity to open doors to another person who could improve his quality of life, his self-esteem and his ability to help himself and his family.

7. Where and when do student-tutor pairs meet?

Each pair sets up a mutually convenient time and place. The HELP center is open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and from 9 a.m. until noon on Fridays. Other suggested meeting sites include the public library or the University of Southern Mississippi library, churches or other public places, with permission. Pairs are encouraged to meet in a neutral place rather than in a home.

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HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

AMERICAN photo by Steve Coleman

TOM MILLER, 59, and his tutor, Kathy Ballard, work on one of his lessons at the HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project Inc.) center. The two have been working together twice a week for more than two years. Mrs. Ballard says she has learned more about the English language, rules of spelling and the reading material since becomin~ a tutor

Illiterate fight hard to learn to read

One in a series

By SHARON WERTZ
AMERICAN Staff Writer

Tom Miller, 59, pushes back a lock of thinning, gray hair. His hands black from the grease racks, his mechanic's uniform damp from the heat of the 90-plus degree day, he has come straight from work to meet his tutor, Kathy Ballard, for his regular lesson.

He glances through his glasses at the neat, middle-aged woman seated across the table from him. When he smiles, his blue eyes take on an impish gleam. "I tell you, she has done wonders ... but sometimes I would get so mad! Now I just say, if you've got the time, I've got the grit!"

They laugh easily together, a laugh born of understanding, of feeling comfortable with one another. For the two are bonded in a shared struggle.

Kathy has taught Tom to read and write.

—

The oldest of eight children, Tom was pulled out of school in the fourth grade to work on his family's farm. "I just never did have the desire to go back," he said.

Half a century later, Tom Miller of Hattiesburg decided to learn to read.

Actually, Tom was doing OK, at least as far as he was concerned.

"I could read very little," he said, "but I had enough experience and know-how that I could get by. I'd been with Firestone as a mechanic for 33 years. I'd ask somebody how you'd spell so-and-so. Somehow I could always get by. I'd take things home for my wife and daughter to read. I used to dial 411 so I wouldn't have to look up the (telephone) number."

One day a little over two years ago, Tom's daughter, Tammy Taylor, called and asked him to go to HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project Inc.).

"I said, 'Sure.' I didn't have any idea what I was getting into. I went out to Southern and registered. I didn't think I'd hear from it. Then Mrs. Ballard called."

Kathy Ballard, a widow, had just moved to Hattiesburg from Vicksburg to work in the dentist office of her daughter, Dr. Barbara Mauldin.

"I read where they were starting

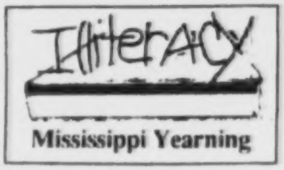
■ See READ, page 10A

Teachers battle discouragement, embarrassment of older students

By SHARON WERTZ
AMERICAN Staff Writer

One of the best-kept secrets in town is the Hattiesburg Public Schools' adult education-GED program. Yet, it was attempting to address adult illiteracy long before Barbara Bush and Julie Mabus made it a hot topic.

"Our biggest problem is people knowing that we've got the program for them," said Hattiesburg Public Schools Adult Education-GED coordinator Jimmy Watkins. "Most hear about it by word of mouth. The illiterate don't read newspapers, but often a friend reads about it and tells them. That's one reason we like to work with HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project Inc.). We refer students to each other."



Mississippi Yearning

Like most school adult education programs, Hattiesburg's was started after the passage of the Adult Education Act in 1966, which set aside federal funding for such programs. In the 23 years since, Hattiesburg's program has seen thousands of adult students pass through its doors. Most come for the ABE (Adult Basic Education) instruction; some come to prepare to take the GED (General Educational Development) high school diploma equivalency test. Watkins said that of the 250 students enrolled in the program last year, about 80 were in the GED program. The rest were learning basic reading, writing and math in ABE classes.

Watkins said when he took over the program he learned quickly that adults are not just older versions of younger students and that teaching them requires special understanding and different approaches.

"I have had to really lecture myself and remind myself that if most of these people had really cared about education and valued it, they wouldn't have drop-

■ See TEACHERS, page 10A

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READ

■ FROM page 1A

HELP, and I went out to USM for training. A couple of weeks later, they called and said they had a student for me.

"They didn't have this neat place to meet then. We tried the public library, but it was closed at night. Then we looked across the street and saw the fire station. We asked if we could meet there. The firemen were so excited that someone wanted to learn to read that they fixed us up a place. We met there until this (the HELP center) opened."

Tom and Kathy have worked together twice a week for more than two years. Kathy had no previous teaching experience, but "if one thing doesn't work, we just try other things and see what works. I talk to other tutors, and the people on the staff are good to help."

Kathy said they tried to make their lessons both fun and practical, playing word games and learning to read road maps, signs and ads in the newspaper.

Tom is almost through Book 4 in the Laubach Learn-to-Read program. He is able to read most things for himself now and even wrote a Christmas story, which was included in "Fireside Memories," a collection of original stories by HELP students published in December 1988.

When he finishes this book, Tom wants to "take about a month off and give her (Kathy) a vacation. Then we'll start back. I don't know how far we'll go."

Tom doesn't kid anybody; it hasn't all been easy. "Oh, many's the time I was ready to quit," he says wryly. "It used to get on my nerves bad! But I've enjoyed it the last six or seven months. I've learned a little more how to cope with myself."

"You don't realize that if you don't read, it's difficult to answer (written) questions," Kathy said. "You have no body language to interpret."

She thinks Tom may have dyslexia, a learning disability. "If so, that makes it (Tom's achievement) even more commendable. He had to work especially hard."

One of the unexpected bonuses of tutoring, Kathy said, was the tremendous amount she learned herself — about the language, rules of spelling and materials they read. "Plus, just the company, for a widow, is nice. He's such a delightful person and we've gotten along so well. I guess that and the fact that it's been a learning experience for me too have kept me going."

The admiration and appreciation is obviously mutual. But Tom is also quick to give credit to his wife and daughter for their help and encouragement. "My wife helps me a lot till she sees I get aggravated. Then she says, 'Why don't you quit?' Then I wouldn't quit for anything."

Now his new-found knowledge is helping in more ways than he anticipated.

Manufacturers have begun making cars equipped with computers. "There's no such thing as just a mechanic anymore," said Tom. "You have to read a computer printout to tell you what to do. I don't know what I would have done without HELP."

Recently, his daughter handed him a note. On it was written, "Daddy, you're going to be a grandfather."

"Just think," he said, beaming, "two years ago I couldn't have read that."

TEACHERS

■ FROM page 1A

ped out in the first place," he said. "You really need to encourage them or they'll drop out."

Many have negative feelings about school that must be overcome. One of the most fragile aspects of dealing with undereducated adults, he said, is their lack of self-confidence and self-esteem.

"Seventy-five percent of my phone calls are from someone calling for someone else," said Watkins. "These people are so reluctant to do it for themselves."

Even after they muster the courage to come, dropping out is a problem. "We lose the low-functioning students first. We try to put them at ease. We tell them not to be embarrassed, that everyone else is in the same boat. Then we give them tests to place them at a level where they can have some initial success. If they get discouraged quickly, they'll quit."

Watkins discovered that many very low-functioning adults were too embarrassed even to come to a class. As a result, the schools are funding a part-time HELP teacher who works one on one with them until they are ready for a class.

Attending class is often difficult for adults. Many are employed. Some hold down more than one job to make ends meet or have a problem with child care while they are in class at night. Most classes meet at night at Mary Bethune Elementary School, but in an effort to give students more options, a new daytime class was started last year at Eureka School. Fifteen adults participated the first semester and 13 the second semester.

Watkins said his teachers try to tailor adult classes to the needs of their students. If the student is very low-functioning, the goal may be to get him up to a sixth-grade reading level. Other students want to progress through secondary classes and get their GED.

Adults who have a high level of skills but who dropped out of high school before graduation may simply fill out an application and take the GED, which is given the first and second Saturdays of each month. Watkins warned, however, that the GED has been upgraded.

"Now students must write an essay," he said. "And the math section of the test is 30 percent algebra and 30 percent geometry."

Want to learn how to read? Just call:

- Toll-free Learning Line (To find adult reading programs in your area): 1-800-325-7323
- HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project, Inc.): 583-2233
- Hattiesburg Public Schools Adult Basic Education-GED: 545-3891
- Forrest County Schools ABE-GED: 584-6383
- Southern Mississippi Planning & Development District's employability training programs: 545-6083

But some do pass it without the preparatory classes. "We had a 60-year-old man from Petal take the GED this year," Watkins said. "He made the second highest score all year and he only had a sixth-grade education."

In addition to the regular classes, the program offers classes at the state Department of Correction's Restitution Center in Hattiesburg, if as many as 12-15 students enroll.

No classes are held in the summer. But during the regular school term, all classes are open not only to adults from Hattiesburg but to those from other districts as well. Several other area school districts also offer adult education classes.

Ervin Carr, director of the Forrest County Schools' program, which only had seven participants last year, said their main problem has been getting students to enroll and stick with it long enough to learn to read.

"They seem to think they can come in here and spend a couple of weeks or months and they'll learn. It takes 12 years to get a high school diploma. They want to get it in only a few days."

Classes are free in all school districts, but the state has set a $15 charge to take the GED. For more information, call Watkins at 545-3891 on Tuesdays or Thursdays or Carr at 584-6383.

NEXT: Literacy on the job

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HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

Illiteracy eating away at U.S. economy

■ On the job, page 8A

One in a series

By SHARON WERTZ
AMERICAN Staff Writer

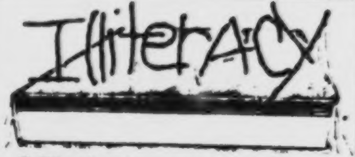
"I've been working here for 30 years. Now you're telling me I'm illiterate?"

"What do you mean? I need a job now! I don't have time to go back to school!"

Anger and frustration echo through the halls of industry as those left behind by an increasingly technological age struggle to come to grips with it. Meanwhile, those very halls threaten to crumble unless answers are found to the scourge of illiteracy that threatens to destroy the nation's economic structure.

An overstatement? Consider these statistics:

■ 27 million adults can't read or write; another 45 million are only marginally competent in basic literacy related tasks.



Mississippi Yearning

■ The median job created in the U.S. economy between 1984 and 2000 will require 13.5 years of education. That median job is at 12.8 years today, according to the Hudson Institute.

■ Since 1967, the proportion of adult dropouts who participate in the labor force has dwindled from 52.3 percent to 42.8 percent.

■ The average earnings of male dropouts ages 20-34 in the Southeastern states declined by 35.5 percent between 1973 and 1985.

■ 90 percent of all occupations require some reading and writing.

Illiteracy isn't what it used to be. Yes, it still includes those who can't read and write. But a recent report on "Workforce Literacy in the South" reflects the evolving meaning of the term: "The data suggest strongly that the problem in the South will be concentrated increasingly among high school dropouts with limited literacy skills rather than grade school dropouts who never learned to read, write, add or subtract.

"More and more," the report predicts, "functional literacy will require the capacity to interpret data and information, to read and understand business forms, charts, blueprints and other complex information — to master what are often termed 'critical thinking skills.' "

Educated and employed persons who think it's not their problem should guess again. Cost estimates vary, but a U.S. Department of Labor study reported: "Conservatively, adult literacy problems are already costing the Southeast regional economy $57.2 billion annually or $4,727 per adult illiterate."

Forrest Chisman says in "Jumpstart: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy," "The hard fact everyone wants to ignore is that 75 percent of the workforce in the year 2000 are adults today ... 20 to 30 million of these people are functionally illiterate ... Unless we reach out to help them, there is no way that we can maintain a high wage, high productivity economy in the decades to come."

Adding to the economic cost of illiteracy is the deterrent factor our area's 27 percent illiteracy rate has on economic development. But neither the Forrest County Development Foundation nor the Hattiesburg Area Chamber of Commerce has any concrete plans to address the issue.

FCDF executive director Bob Daniels said, "It hasn't presented a problem in

■ See ECONOMY, page 8A

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

Hercules workers gain more than reading skills

■ Illiteracy costs plenty, 1A

By SHARON WERTZ
[illegible]

Industries are rapidly learning that to compete in the world market, they must modernize or die.

Unfortunately for many less-educated employees, that modernization means the end of the line.

But not at Hattiesburg's Hercules plant.

"We realized in 1984 after our primary operation shut down that we needed to do something with some of our long-term employees," said employee relations assistant Karen Rolf. "They had done well in the primary area because of their physical strength, but we found that some of our operators couldn't even read."

Darlene Dale, now principal of Lillie Burney Magnet School, was hired to direct the program, and part-time teachers were hired.

Twenty-four men volunteered to take the classes, which met at the Hercules plant.

Today, 15 men attend classes twice a week year-round.

"Anytime your employees become more literate, you're going to see a benefit," said Rolf. "Darlene keeps the excitement going, makes the men proud of their accomplishments. As we become more modern, we use computers and math and workers have to understand more about the total operation. If you have an employee who can't read, write or compute, they're going to be afraid to try, afraid someone will find out they can't read and write."

Illiteracy

Mississippi Yearning

Mrs. Dale said she and the teachers try to make learning a positive experience. "The men have said so many times, 'We're glad you don't fuss at us, that you tell us we're doing good.' The men are so quick to thank their Hercules managers for letting them learn to read on the worksite," she said.

"Many of the men really could not read a word," said Mrs. Dale. "One man who started from scratch will bring his book and read it aloud to me now. He is just so thrilled to be able to read."

Plant manager Preston Kirkendall said the program has improved his employees' skills as well as their safety, since now they can read instructions and signs.

Some of the employees have even been promoted as a result of their new-found skills.

But there are other benefits.

"The biggest benefit is to our employees' morale," said Kirkendall. "The overall morale has gone up tremendously. It is well worth the time and money we have invested in it."

ECONOMY

■ FROM page 1A

attracting or hiring a work force to date, but we anticipate it will in the future." Nevertheless, he said, "As it stands now, we don't have any plans for any literacy programs."

Eugene Starks, HACAC executive director, said the Chamber "realizes the impact illiteracy does have on the work force and wants to promote awareness and encourage businesses to offer (literacy) programs to their employees." Nevertheless, he said, "We don't have anything in place or on the front burner ... but the education committee is looking at it."

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Others are doing something more tangible.

Basic literacy and GED programs through HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project, Inc.) and public schools' adult education programs offer help. But only 571 adults were enrolled in the combined programs in Forrest County last year, although 12,868 county residents have not completed high school.

Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD) provides programs for economically disadvantaged older workers and youth, funded by the Jobs Training Partnership Act.

The youth program emphasizes basic literacy skills as well as employability skills; the adult program, for ages 55 and over, teaches employability skills and helps participants find jobs. But, although program supervisors refer adults who need assistance with reading, writing and math to HELP or public school programs, they find that, for various reasons, few follow through.

One positive development is JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training), a part of the federal Family Support Act of 1988. JOBS will require mothers who receive AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and other custodial parents under the age of 24 who have not completed high school to attend school or job training. JOBS will replace the current WIN Program (AFDC Work Program) Oct. 1, 1990.

Dr. Marion Sephton, Director of Client Career Development for the state Department of Public Welfare, said of JOBS, "If we're going to do anything to get up off the bottom of the economic ladder, we have to give these people the training they need to get jobs in business or industry. I think this is a tremendous opportunity."

A promising approach for those already employed is the implementation of worksite literacy programs. Many businesses and industries, faced with the alternative of firing long-time employees whose literacy skills have not kept pace with technological advances, are choosing to provide them with basic skills training.

Hattiesburg's Hercules plant initiated on-site literacy classes for its employees in 1985 when it shifted its operations in a new direction.

Plant manager Preston Kirkendall said the program has not only improved his employees' morale and skills — resulting in promotions for some — but it improved their safety, since they could now read instructions and warnings.

Currently, Hercules operates the only worksite literacy program in Hattiesburg, but several other industries have expressed an interest in starting one.

One aspect of Mississippi first lady Julie Mabus' literacy initiative is a model workplace literacy project in Meridian, where Peavey Electronics, Meridian Junior College, the National Alliance of Business and the Mississippi National Guard are implementing a cooperative project featuring the use of functional literacy software adapted from the military for civilian employees.

In another pilot project in northeast Mississippi, a mobile basic skills laboratory has been outfitted to go from workplace to workplace for literacy instruction.

As an incentive for employers to provide worksite literacy programs, the 1989 Legislature passed a bill granting a 25 percent tax credit for every dollar spent on such training. Mississippi is the first state in the nation to pass such a bill.

"We must make people understand that it is in their best interest to teach basic reading and workplace skills on the worksite," said Mrs. Mabus. "If they don't, the workforce of tomorrow will not be able to compete in the world market."

NEXT: A teacher's mission

Want to learn how to read? Just call:

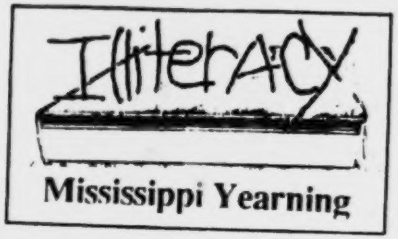
- Toll-free Learning Line (To find adult reading programs in your area): 1-800-325-7323
- HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project, Inc.): 583-2233
- Hattiesburg Public Schools Adult Basic Education-GED: 545-3001
- Forrest County Schools ABE-GED: 584-9303
- Southern Mississippi Planning & Development District's employability training programs: 545-2137
- Court Street United Methodist Church literacy program (beginning Aug. 22): 583-1711

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

Teacher breaks barriers of illiteracy

One in a series

By REBECCA COTTINGHAM
Special to the AMERICAN



Mississippi Yearning

It was a hot summer day in July when the keeper of one of the local cemeteries found Jim and Dianne.

They had wandered across the country living under bridges, in old abandoned buildings and sometimes in wooded areas. They had one bag of clothing. Their food consisted of wild berries, fruit and fish caught in the streams under bridges and baked over an open fire.

They came into town and found refuge in the cemetery. When they were discovered, they were taken to the Baptist Missions Office.

At the time Jim and Dianne came to the office, I had just returned from Ridgecrest, N.C., where I had taken a literacy course. I didn't realize at that time how many people in the United States cannot read or write.

As my husband and I drove home from Ridgecrest, I began to pray, "Lord, send someone my way that I might teach them to read."

We arrived home on Sunday, and on Monday Jim and Dianne were at the Missions Office seeking help. They had every kind of need mankind has today, plus Jim couldn't read or write — not even his name. The Lord brought them to the perfect place — the Missions Office where my husband works. He called me, and we immediately went to work.

We helped them secure an apartment for low-income people and took them bedding and food. We began to let people know about them, and many responded, bringing furniture, curtains, pictures, dishes, pots and pans.

When I began to communicate with him, he was very shy and wouldn't hold up his head. Dianne could read and write fairly well, so I only worked with Jim.

Jim had so many needs. At home, he had lived in conditions of poverty. His father was mean to him. His mother, now separated from his father, tried to

■ See TEACHER, page 14A

The work is never finished

Rebecca Cottingham and her husband, the Rev. Russell Cottingham, of Ellisville, are Southern Baptist home missionaries.

The Rev. Cottingham, associate director of missions for the Jones County Baptist Association, operates the Christian Food Mission in Laurel, to which "Jim" and "Diane" were brought for assistance in the summer of 1987. Mrs. Cottingham said she didn't want to reveal the couple's real names because they have made new lives for themselves now.

Mrs. Cottingham searched until she found Jim's mother, then wrote and told her all that was happening in her son's life. Mother and son began corresponding and were later reunited. Last year, Jim and Diane moved to Tennessee, where he is working in a sawmill. Jim and Mrs. Cottingham still correspond.

Now Mrs. Cottingham is teaching a 35-year-old woman to read.

"She had encephalitis when she was young and dropped out of school in the first grade," said Mrs. Cottingham of her student. "She was always told that it affected her mind, but I don't see any evidence of that. I just think she was always told she couldn't do it. She has a daughter in the Star Reach (gifted) program.

"This is the most rewarding thing I've ever gotten into."

TEACHER

■ FROM page 1A

keep Jim with her, but he wanted to get away from the now-broken home. He felt no one cared for him.

So, at the age of 12, Jim left home. He lived with relatives part of the time, but as he grew older, he met Dianne and they began their wandering journey, not knowing where the roads would lead them.

Jim needed self-confidence. He had weak motivations. He thought of himself only as a failure. I had to get him to break through all these barriers so that one day he could get into the mainstream of society.

Jim and I began to work in every area of his life. He soon saw that I cared and that I intended to help him until he could read and write, develop his personality and get a good job.

Jim's heart's desire was to learn to read. So, with all my new books and new knowledge, I began to work with him. This was different from teaching in the public schools. When I finished the day at school, I left it there until the next day. This was not true with Jim. First of all, he didn't want to quit when the time was up for his lessons. He would take assignments home and work for hours learning to print a few easy words, and I would go home with all his needs on my mind.

Jim could count money; so he knew his numbers from one to 10. I taught him to use the telephone. He was thrilled that he could call me on the phone, and call he did, every time I remembered to give him a quarter! That was money well-spent.

We met at the Missions Office for our lessons. Jim felt comfortable with me now. His shyness was vanishing.

We started in our first book, and Jim learned the beginning sounds of the letters. He was so excited to be able to recognize and pronounce the words the first day. He said that every time he sees a bird, it will remind him of the first word he learned — bird. When Jim pronounced words, he would look at me and say, "I'm doing good." His self-esteem was improving.

I taught Jim to print the alphabet, and before long, he could put small words together. He learned to print his name, and then he learned to write his name in cursive writing, for one day he would need to sign his name on papers. Each day, we advanced to a new lesson. He was learning so fast.

Jim so much wanted to find a job, but because he still couldn't read the street signs, he had a fear of getting lost. Before long, some men began coming by and taking him to help catch chickens. The chicken hatchery let him work some at the plant.

October came and I learned that Jim had a birthday that month. The volunteers stepped back in to help. We had a birthday cake, ice cream and plenty of presents. Jim was now 30. This was his first birthday party. He was very excited.

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- Forrest County Schools ABE-GED: 584-9303.
- Southern Mississippi Planning & Development District's employability training programs: 545-9303.

Thanksgiving comes and goes and Jim is in the second book now. I'm also teaching some English along the way. He can write short sentences, spelling the words by himself.

I can see Jim's personality changing now. He is friendly, wears a smile, has developed self-esteem and dresses neatly, with his curly hair well-groomed and teeth well-brushed.

Christmas is coming, and those who know about Jim and Dianne have provided a tree and all the trimmings and presents piled high. They had the biggest Christmas ever, and those of us who helped had our biggest, just knowing we helped them.

I kept working harder than ever with Jim. I wanted him to become independent and some day be on his own. Jim's desire was to have a good job, a home and a family.

In the springtime we found a farm near Petal and helped Jim and Dianne move onto it. They worked in a chicken house and on the farm and were very happy.

I hope that Jim will continue to study and that one day I'll know he has a good job. The reward for me is a feeling of personal satisfaction in knowing I have helped someone along the way.

These words written 25 centuries ago by Chang Jau, a Chinese Taoist philosopher, tell how I feel about teaching people to read:

"If your project is for a year, sow a seed.

If it is for 10 years, plant a tree.

If 100, teach the people.

If you reap once only, it will be a one time thing.

Planting a tree, it will be tenfold.

Teaching the people, the result is a hundredfold.

If you give a man a fish, he will be nourished once.

If you teach him to fish, he will feed himself and his family all his life."

NEXT: Attacking the problem

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

Illiteracy begins at home

Illiteracy

Mississippi Yearning

Programs need family focus

One in a series

By SHARON WERTZ
AMERICAN Staff Writer

The only long-term solution to the problem of illiteracy is to attack it at its roots.

"The process of illiteracy starts early in life," said Mississippi's first lady Julie Mabus, who heads the Mississippi Literacy Coalition. "I have seen too many children start kindergarten without ever having said a word because they have never had anyone talk to them or read to them.

"When they start school, they are already behind, and with each year they just fall further behind. It's not surprising that so many of these children fall prey to drugs and gangs and eventually drop out of school."

Ironically, many of the parents whose children are most affected cannot read this article. But recently-passed federal legislation could change that.

The Family Support Act of 1988 sets up a new JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training) program which will require mothers who receive AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) funds to attend school for basic skills or vocational training. Because a significant percentage of these mothers are among the functionally illiterate, many experts think that this could be the most significant literacy legislation since compulsory education. JOBS will replace the current WIN Program (AFDC Work Program) Oct. 1, 1990.

Meanwhile, other wheels have been set into motion. First Lady Barbara Bush has founded The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy to provide support for research, materials and training for family literacy programs. Through the visibility of her position, Mrs. Bush hopes to spark illiteracy awareness nationwide.

"In 10 years of traveling around the United States ... it has become very apparent to me that we must attack the problem of a more literate America through the family," she said. "We all

■ See ILLITERACY, page 14A

ILLITERACY

■ FROM page 1A

know that adults with reading problems tend to raise children with reading problems."

One approach, the Kenan-SREB Family Literacy Project in Louisville, Ky., has been widely studied. The project has brought low-income preschool children and their mothers together in a public school setting, teaching them basic skills separately, then teaching the mothers to interact with their children through games, reading, crafts and conversation.

"The number of children living in poverty has increased by 50 percent since 1973," Sharon Darling, Kenan project director, told participants at the National Conference on State Literacy Initiatives in Jackson in April. "More than 50 percent of poor children enter school two years behind their peers. They fail when they walk in the door and fall further behind the longer they stay."

Darling said the most important literacy variable is the educational level of the family, followed by the economic level.

"In a study of 6,000 people with less than a 6th grade education, less than 1 percent had parents who had finished high school," she said. "The problem must be addressed in the home."

Pilot family literacy programs are currently being initiated in Greenville and Hazelhurst by the Mississippi Governor's Office for Literacy. Mrs. Mabus said those programs will be studied and implemented eventually — with modifications, as indicated — throughout the state.

CHILD CARE

As effective as family literacy efforts may be with the few involved, many say no real progress can be made toward eradicating illiteracy unless programs are implemented involving all children.

New York Times Company Foundation president Fred Hechinger believes the answer is in providing quality preschool care.

Hechinger has studied educational programs all over the world, including Scandinavia, where he said there is a 100 percent literacy rate. The reason, he said, is simple: "Scandinavia has a policy on children; we don't."

That policy includes public child care centers for children ages 2-5, where they are taught through play. Children help do simple chores, and no written reports or records, except health records, are kept. Constant efforts are make to draw parents into the schools.

"My main impression," said Hechinger, "was how happy the children were. They were not coddled, but supervised, with the older ones taking care of the younger ones and the teachers in the background. It teaches them to become responsible."

In addition, the Scandinavian policy on children requires employers to allow a nine-month post-natal leave for either the father or the mother, paid for out of an employees' insurance fund, so that a parent can stay at home with the child.

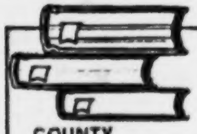
Since the program was started in 1935, Hechinger said, infant mortality has been cut in half and illiteracy has been eliminated.

HEADSTART

Probably the closest thing to such a program in the United States has been Headstart, started in the '60s. The program, which targets disadvantaged children ages 3 and 4, has been effective in bringing these children up to a level comparable to that of more advantaged children by the time they enter school.

Unfortunately, Headstart funds were cut in 1987 and the program had to cut back on the number of children it could accept.

Peggy Butler, Forrest County P.A.C.E. Headstart director, said 440 Forrest County children currently are enrolled, compared to 785 in 1987. Currently, the program accepts children on a first-come, first-serve basis, except for those with a handicapping condition.



COUNTY	Total # Adults (age 25 & over)	MAXIMUM YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY ADULTS 0-8yrs	Less than High School Total #	Percent
Covington	8,774	32.7%	4,926	56.1
Forrest	34,868	19.1%	12,868	36.9
Greene	5,277	28.3%	2,642	50.0
Jefferson Davis	7,436	33%	4,168	56.1
Jones	36,037	24.7%	16,219	45.0
Lamar	12,739	20.4%	4,972	39.0
Marion	14,295	31.5%	7,301	51.1
Pearl River	18,626	24%	7,857	42.2
Perry	5,280	27%	2,447	46.3
Stone	5,163	20%	2,150	41.6
Total for H.A. circulation area	149,369	24%	65,510	43.9
Statewide Totals	1,367,966	27.2%	624,794	45.2

Source 1980 Census

American Graphic by Anthony Clark

Headstart's two local centers — at Jefferson Davis and Grace Love schools — provide educational readiness as well as health, dental and other special assessments and referral. Children also are given a nutritious breakfast and lunch each day.

"A hungry child can't think," said Butler.

She said studies have shown children who attend Headstart are much more likely to finish high school and even go on to college than other disadvantaged children.

"Many of our children," she said, "are 'A' students in the first and second grades." But the performance of many deteriorates by the third grade. Why? Butler thinks the answer lies in the family.

"A vital part of Headstart is parent involvement," said Butler. "We have a day set aside every month for parents to participate. The public schools don't have that."

Butler said Headstart offers several classes for parents and is trying to get those parents to participate in local literacy programs. The Family Support Legislation offers hope. And the Bush administration has promised to increase its funding for Headstart.

Still, all roads lead to family literacy. It's the key that unlocks the door to the future.

NEXT: Ways to help

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Illiteracy battle is everyone's fight

Last in a series

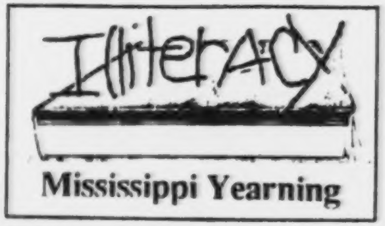
By SHARON WERTZ
AMERICAN Staff Writer

Nationwide, more than one in five adults does not have the reading skills to function effectively in daily life. In Mississippi, it's more than one in four. And it's getting worse.

Despite valiant efforts of volunteers, private and public school efforts and government dollars, the ranks of the functionally illiterate are growing by about 2 million every year.

It didn't happen overnight. There have always been illiterate people whose lives lacked the dimensions and opportunities that come with literacy. But it didn't become a popular issue until it threatened the nation's pocketbook.

As Mississippi's first lady Julie Mabus, who has made literacy her top priority, put it: "We have not been successful through approaching this as a human services issue. We must look at it as an economic development issue if people are to pay attention."



At one time a living could be earned with a strong back and a willingness to work. Now, 90 percent of all occupations require reading, writing and computation. The level of those skills needed for even the most basic jobs in business and industry is rising rapidly to compete with a better educated foreign workforce. And the United States' workforce is not keeping up.

Some programs — notably Laubach Literacy Action and Adult Basic Education — have already helped many undereducated adults learn basic skills. More recently, other efforts, such as those funded by the Job Training Partnership Act and worksite programs, have entered the adult literacy scene.

Nevertheless, of 6,668 adults in Forrest County with less than an eighth-grade education, only 788 were enrolled in all adult basic education programs in the county last year — and some of those were from other counties. Consider, too, that Forrest County has one of the strongest adult education programs, as well as one of the highest literacy rates, in the state. In other counties, the gap between those needing help and those getting help is even more disproportionate.

Clearly, more needs to be done to reach more people. But what, and how?

Experts in the field and several recent literacy studies say a multi-pronged approach is needed:

■ Increase public awareness of the problem of illiteracy and the help available. A series of national award-winning TV public service ads for the Mississippi Literacy Coalition's toll-free Learning Line is available free to TV stations around the state. By calling 1-800-325-7323 and giving the city in which they live, callers are put in touch with adult learning services in their area.

■ Attack the problem at its roots — in the family and in a child's early years. Family literacy projects — pairing teaching undereducated parents along with their pre-school children — must be implemented on a mass scale. But because such programs will not reach all children, local, state and federal government support must be enlisted to help provide quality pre-

■ See ILLITERACY, page 12A

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ILLITERACY

■ FROM page 1A

school care for all children so that they will have the foundations to succeed in school.

■ Once children are in school, they must be given opportunities to succeed. Studies show that frustration and discouragement at poor academic achievement are major factors in behavior, drug and other problems that often lead to dropping out.

Dropout prevention programs, such as the one in the Hattiesburg Public Schools, identify potential dropouts in elementary school and provide them with extra help to try to prevent their dropping out.

■ Establish programs such as "Sentenced to Read," where juvenile offenders are forced to study reading rather than serve a jail term. That, along with prison literacy programs, might give these youngsters the self-esteem and the skills to earn an honest living as an alternative to a life of crime.

Forrest County and Youth Court Judge Mike McPhail said he is looking at such a program in Hancock and Harrison counties and hopes to be able to start one here.

■ Provide worksite literacy programs. Business and industry stand to lose the most with an illiterate work force, so they should be encouraged to fund grants for community literacy efforts and provide worksite literacy programs for their employees. Experience has shown that workers are much more likely to take worksite classes than to go elsewhere for help after work hours.

To provide an incentive, the 1989 Mississippi Legislature passed a bill that allows employers a 25 percent tax credit for providing child care and basic skills training to their employees.

■ Develop greater accountability in literacy programs and methods of serving more people in less time.

Joy Tharpe, Special Assistant for Workforce Literacy in the Governor's Office for Literacy, said, "We want to move toward small group instruction. We'll still depend on volunteers, but we'll try to move individuals toward their goals in less time. Individuals will be evaluated after 50 hours training. We feel that they would be more successful in meeting goals if there were greater accountability."

■Secure greater private sector and government involvement at every level. Government should establish policies and fund research, innovative ventures in literacy and technical assistance to literacy programs. It should also coordinate available programs and agencies to prevent duplication.

The Mississippi Literacy Foundation has been set up to provide seed money for such projects within the state. "We're trying to get literacy projects away from depending on the state year after year," said Mrs. Mabus. "That's why we're promoting more business and local involvement."

In a poor state like Mississippi, however, with a 27 percent illiteracy rate, those funds must be supplemented by such federal funding as can be secured. Federal funds which heretofore targeted only the disadvantaged or unemployed must be made available to those who have jobs but who lack the skills to keep them or to advance.

—

Can it be done? Maybe not in our lifetime. But experts say that unless we map out a plan and begin a concerted attack on this enemy, illiteracy may do what communism and fascism and Nazism have failed to do: topple the United States from its social, political and economic perch atop world powers, and bring the people of the United States down with it.

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■ HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project, Inc.): 583-2233

■ Hattiesburg Public Schools Adult Basic Education-GED: 545-3001

■ Forrest County Schools ABE-GED: 584-6383

■ Southern Mississippi Planning & Development District's employability training programs: 545-2137

■ Court Street United Methodist Church literacy program (beginning Aug. 22): 583-1711

Local program tries to hone skills of disadvantaged

By SHARON WERTZ

American Staff Writer

Illiteracy

Mississippi Yearning

Society has given up on many of the youths with whom Glenn Soileau works: 20 percent are youth court referrals; 40 percent are pregnant teen-agers receiving AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children); 75 percent read below the eighth-grade level; and 25 percent read below the fourth-grade level.

If they sound like candidates for a one-way ticket to the welfare rolls, guess again. These young people are participants in the Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District's (SMPDD) employability training programs for economically disadvantaged youth and older workers. And some of them are already working.

The aim of SMPDD's youth program, funded through the federal JTPA (Jobs Training Partnership Act), is to reclaim school dropouts, ages 16-21, and to teach them skills that will lead to employment. Students receive 300 hours of instruction — usually six hours a day for three months.

Soileau, youth program director, said his program has trained some 130-150 Forrest and Jones County youths a year since 1983 in reading, writing, math and such job-related skills as what employers expect (punctuality, appropriate dress, etc.), how to look for a job and appropriate behavior on the job. He also familiarizes them with a variety of occupations that are within their range of skills.

"If their skills are better, we try to get them to pass their GED," said Soileau. "If they are very low, we just try to bring them up as far as possible."

To date, Soileau said, for every 10 students enrolled, five have completed their GED, one more makes significant educational gains and "we lose four. We don't know what happens to them."

"We hate to lose any," he said, "but we feel like they would nearly all be lost otherwise. At least we're helping some."

—

At the other end of the workforce spectrum, many senior adults find an increasingly sophisticated job market passing them by.

But SMPDD offers help for them, too. Marsha Taylor, coordinator of the older workers program, said her office trains adults ages 55 and older to enter the work force.

Most have no idea how to apply for a job, she said. Some have been laid off jobs they have held for years because they can't handle the new technology. Some widows, unable to live on a meager Social Security allowance, find themselves needing to work but lacking skills.

The SMPDD program offers open entry, open exit 20-hour courses in employability skills, cash and retail sales training, computer literacy and job search assistance — skills designed to make older adults "functionally literate," or as Ms. Taylor said, "literate on the job." Through May, 88 older adults had been trained this year and 51 of those have gotten jobs.

If these adults lack basic reading, writing and math skills, they are referred to HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project Inc.) or the public schools' basic education program. Unfortunately, said Ms. Taylor, few follow through.

"They think they are too old to learn, or they are embarrassed, or they need to work right now, or they are insulted that someone said they are illiterate," she said. "As many individuals as there are, there are that many excuses — or reasons — why they won't go. It's a shame."

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■ For more information about SMPDD programs, call Soileau or Taylor at 545-2137 or go by their office at 1020 West 4th St., Hattiesburg.

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HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

9-13-88

Dropout grant shows significant approach to serious problem

The announcement last week that the Hattiesburg School District is the only one in the state and one of 89 in the nation to receive federal funds for dropout prevention is a significant step toward addressing one of the major problems of our society.

The $359,437 federal grant — one of the largest in the nation — will go, Superintendent Gordon Walker said, toward "early intervention, personalized instruction, increased outreach through coordination of community partnerships and the development of a model for the systematic collection of data concerning the at-risk population."

The program will help pay for an instructor for juvenile offenders, classes for pregnant teenpagers, teaching intervention methods for parents and enhancing the TIP program already in operation at the city's Alternative School, among others.

Nationwide, 28 percent of all students drop out before graduating from high school, with Mississippi ranking sixth in dropout rate. Walker said the 28 percent dropout rate carries a price tag nationally of $147 billion per year in welfare payments, lack of productivity and loss of taxes. The impact in Mississippi is compounded by the facts that the state has the lowest per capita income in the nation, one of the highest teen-age pregnancy rates and ranks last in fiscal committment to education.

The picture is not a pretty one. It is a picture painted over a period many years. Its canvas often shows parents and grandparents who were also dropouts, who do not value education, who themselves were teen-age parents and who are on welfare or earning minimum wage. It is an expensive picture, especially in Mississippi, where the number one source of income is transfer (welfare) payments.

To improve this picture will involve changing attitudes, educating parents as well as students and giving troubled kids alternatives and support. Such changes don't happen overnight, but this program sounds as if it is on the right track.

Added to a program already in place in the schools to identify potential dropouts and help keep them in schools, it could have a significant effect — not only on our economy, but in the quality of the lives of each of these potential dropouts.

We commend the school system's administrative staff, which wrote the grant, for its vision and its diligence in pursuing that vision. We also thank those who, by writing letters and providing other forms of support, helped secure this grant: Gov. Ray Mabus, U.S. Congressman Trent Lott, U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran, University of Southern Mississippi President Aubrey K. Lucas, judges and the Forrest County Chapter of the NAACP.

It shows what can happen when people see a need and cooperate to address that need.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

12-21-88

State must prepare *all* students for life after school

A report on education in Mississippi prepared by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. has made some points worth pursuing.

Dr. Phyllis McClure, in presenting her report to the state College Board last week, said that the state is making progress in its educational programs but is still falling short of adequately preparing students for life after high school — either for college or employment.

One problem, she said, was that although Mississippi has toughened its college prep core curriculum, the actual competency of the courses within that core varies widely from school to school.

It stands to reason.

The board expressed the intent of looking at the quality of course requirements and trying to make improvements, as well it should. A list of skills and-or information to be mastered in each course would be a good place to start.

At the heart of the problem, however, is the shortage of good, well-qualified teachers, especially for many of the higher level college prep courses. It is hard to find a competent calculus or chemistry or physics teacher who will go to Sumrall or Collins or Wiggins when he or she could make three or four times as much in industry. Even larger cities are having a hard time finding well-qualified teachers, with the shrinking number of college graduates who want to teach.

Without good teaching our children will not learn, so something must be done to bring our best and brightest back into teaching. Learning cannot be legislated, but incentives to teach — such as competitive salaries and fewer extra-classroom duties — can and should be legislated. We've made a good start, but more must be done.

Another cause for concern is that about 47 percent of the students taking the ACT in 1986-88 took it without taking the state-required college prep core courses. McClure, attributing much of the lapse to ignorance of the requirements, called for better dissimination of information about the core requirements to students and parents.

That should help. But we think the suggestion of board member Johnnie E. Walls Jr. that all students be required to take the college prep curriculum is unrealistic.

Although advanced courses should be required of college prep students, it would be self-defeating to require all students to take those courses. All students do not have the same abilities or aptitudes, and to ignore that fact would be to discourage and disenfrachise a large percentage of our students.

Many students would never graduate if they had to pass trigonometry or physics, but they deserve the opportunity to make useful contributions in other areas. If hurdles are put in their paths which are beyond their ability to conquer, many more may give up and drop out.

A better alternative would be to place greater emphasis on practical application of knowledge and skills in the general education curriculum and to steer more of these students into vocational programs.

McClure was right when she said our schools must do a better job of preparing students for life after high school. But we must prepare *all* our students, not just our top academic achievers. And we must prepare them realistically.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

2-17-89

Ducksworth death writes sad ending to tragic story

On Tuesday, Feb. 15, life ended for former West Jones High School football standout Ronnie Ducksworth in a dark alley in Billings, Mont. An arrest, an escape, a scuffle, three gunshots. And he and the young police detective who had arrested him were dead.

Ducksworth was 24 years old, an age when he should have been starting a career, looking ahead to family life, planning for his future.

There was a time when his future looked bright. He rushed for 5,550 yards in three seasons at West Jones and was named Player of the Year in 1982 by the *Clarion-Ledger, Jackson Daily News*. Highly recruited, he signed a letter of intent with the University of Southern Mississippi. But Ducksworth, a special education student, could not meet the academic requirements for admission to USM.

In 1983 he enrolled at Tyler Junior College in Tyler, Texas, where he rushed for 1,630 yards his freshman year and was named to the Junior College All-American team. His sophomore year, he rushed for 960 yards, despite an injury.

But Ducksworth's problems continued to plague him. He emerged from junior college without enough hours to transfer to a senior college or university and without any skills but football.

On May 28, 1986, he was arrested in connection with two Hattiesburg burglaries after barricading himself in a house and threatening to shoot himself. Ironically, he had told sports reporters earlier that day that he was to sign a contract with the Philadelphia Eagles football team.

He pleaded guilty to the two Forrest County burglary charges in December 1986 and two in Jones County in January 1987 and was jailed and-or imprisoned from May 1986 to May 1988. But even while he was in jail, his football talents were in demand. In Billings, former Rocky Mountain College coach Lee Dobbyns learned about him and tried to arrange for him to attend his college. But again Ducksworth's academic record rendered him ineligible

Ducksworth nevertheless arrived in Billings in June 1988, hoping to play football, but when Dobbyns learned he had signed a contract with the Orlando (Fla.) Renegades, a now-defunct USFL team, he said NAIA rules prohibited using him and "advised him to go back to Mississippi because he didn't have a job."

Now Ducksworth is dead. And so is Det. Alex Mavity, 28, a young policeman who was just doing his job.

The tragedy of Ducksworth's life was that if he couldn't play football, he couldn't do anything — or thought he couldn't. So he turned to crime.

How could his story have been different? What if he had been channeled into a vocational program in high school so that he could have earned a living at a trade? Did anyone so advise him? Did they prepare him for the frustration of joblessness and failure? Did anyone ever tell him that football wouldn't last forever?

Maybe they did. Maybe he wasn't listening. We don't know about his values, whether he grew up being taught — by example and otherwise — the virtues of honesty and hard work.

All that is academic now. But what about the thousands of other students who are graduating from high schools every year with virtually no skills? What is to become of them?

Ronnie Ducksworth no longer has a future. And, because of the desperation wrought by Ducksworth's thwarted dreams, neither does Det. Mavity. No words can change that or comfort those who loved them. But we hope their sad fate prompts a serious look at what is being done in our schools to prepare academic underachievers to make an honest living. We shudder at what we see of the alternative.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

3-14-89

Education President should put money where his mouth is

As most area schools are out this week for spring break, it is a good time to pause and take stock of the state of our nation's public schools.

Certainly, we have made progress since the 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk," shook America from its educational doldrums. But there are still serious impediments to our children's education.

Approximately one million students drop out of school each year — about 2,700 on any given day. Millions more skip school or fail to learn because of pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, hunger, family problems or failure to understand English.

Lack of education funding deprives thousands of students of such things as computers and laboratory equipment, critical learning tools for preparing for life in the 21st century. Scarcity of students planning to be teachers presages an alarming future teacher shortage.

We were cautiously optimistic when George Bush characterized himself as the "Education President." The name, we hoped, was an indication of his priorities. But Bush's proposed fiscal year 1990 budget for the Department of Education gives little room for encouragement. Although greater than President Reagan's last budget proposal, Bush's budget does not keep up with the 4.1 percent inflation rate projected for 1990 and thus represents a real dollar decline in education funding.

Leonard Rovins, president of the National School Boards Association, had some comments on Bush's education budget that are worth sharing:

"The $22.5 billion requested for all education (preschool through graduate school) is less than 2 percent of all federal spending ... For every $100 spent by the federal government, less than one dollar is spent on elementary an[illegible]ary education.

"The $280 [illegible] we spend on one B-1 bomber would pay for more than 186,000 computers in our classrooms or pay the annual salaries of 9,600 teachers or buy nearly 280 million school lunches. What good is a $280 million bomber if Americans are not provided the kind of education needed to produce future pilots to fly it?

"If George Bush really wants to be remembered as the Education President, he must make a real commitment. This is why we have asked the President to include in his budget an additional $1 billion in funding for major programs aimed at the education and support of "at risk" youth. He should also fight for the reauthorization of programs that have proven successful, including vocational education, child nutrition and school lunches. Finally, he should fight for programs to help local school districts attract more and better teachers, particularly minority teachers.

"While federal funding is not the only answer to current problems, the federal government must accept its share of the fiscal burden and responsibility. It must help our local school boards prepare our children in order to build a stronger and more competitive America for world leadership into the 21st century."

5-2-89

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

'Sentenced to Read' a needed alternative for youth offenders

Illiteracy leads to unemployment, unemployment to poverty, and poverty to crime. Yet if our criminal justice system exists, as we claim, to rehabilitate rather than reform, why doesn't it aim more at the source of the problem?

In some states it does, when the criminals are youth offenders. Florida and Kentucky are both using literacy programs to arrest recidivism in juvenile crime, and fortunately for us, they're willing to extradite the program to other states. Surely Mississippi warrants it.

"Sentenced to Read," as the program is called, acknowledges the link between illiteracy and crime and offers the courts a solution: constructive sentencing. In the program, kids are forced to study reading rather than serve a jail term.

One more blow against "warehousing" criminals? It's that, sure, but a much more important one for a couple of reasons. First, it targets criminals in their early, formative stages: their youth. As any law enforcement officer will attest, the best crime deterrent is crime prevention.

Second, it goes beyond standard forms of alternative sentencing. Forcing offenders to pick up litter, for example, may ease prison overcrowding and even beautify roadsides, but it does little to rehabilitate the criminal. Sentencing an illiterate to become literate does, for it gives him a better chance of coping, legitimately, with lawful society (offering, as it does, an important requisite for landing a job).

In Kentucky, they measure the program's success by the decline in repeat offenders — or put more positively, by the increase in those rehabilitated. Eighty percent "were turned around and didn't commit another crime," as program Director C.J. Bailey told a group of Coast officials last week. That's double the normal rate.

In Mississippi, two Coastal counties — Hancock and Harrison — have adopted their own "Sentenced to Read" programs. So should Forrest and Lamar and, given the rampant rate of illiteracy throughout this state, every other county.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

5-31-89

Test results point to problems that go beyond tests

The release last week of Mississippi students' scores on the Mississippi Functional Literacy Exam (FLE) and the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) tests brought some good news and some bad news.

The good news is that scores of third, fifth and eighth graders on the BSAP were up for the third year in a row. State Superintendent of Education Richard Boyd attributed the improvement of the third and fifth graders to programs — public school kindergarten and teacher assistants — added after the Education Reform Act of 1982.

The bad news is that the overall composite score of 11th graders on the FLE dropped 2.9 points, from 813.2 to 810.3, even though the percentage of students failing the exam decreased slightly, from 7.3 percent in 1988 to 7.2 percent this April. This school year marks the first time 12th graders must pass the FLE to graduate. If they fail the test given initially in April of their junior year, they get three other chances to retake it.

The percentage of local students passing the test was high: Forrest County Agricultural High School, 97 percent; Hattiesburg High, 94; North Forrest High, 98; Oak Grove High, 99; Petal High, 98. Other area schools' percentages were listed in the Saturday, May 27 *American*.

If one is to fairly evaluate and compare these scores, however, factors such as the number of lower income and black students, both of whom traditionally score lower on standardized tests, must be considered. For instance, 65 percent of students at Hattiesburg High are black and 75 percent are on the free lunch program, compared to small percentages of both groups at the other local schools.

We are glad these schools had high percentages of students passing. But the FLE is not a test of advanced knowledge. It tests very basic skills in "reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic" — skills any student should have mastered before leaving elementary school. As such, NO student should fail it.

Boyd has said a written exam will be added next year to the eighth grade test to "flag" students needing help so they will be prepared to pass the FLE in the 11th grade. He is also urging that major high school remediation programs be included in Gov. Ray Mabus' yet-to-be-drafted Education Reform Act II.

Those measures might help. Certainly, remediation is called for in the short-range picture for those students already past the grades when they should have learned the basic skills. But, in the long run, we must take a long, hard look at how we are teaching these basics to our students.

Some students have more difficulty learning and less encouragement at home than others. If these students are to succeed, they must have more individual help than one teacher with a classroom full of students can provide. The addition of aides in the primary grades has helped, but somehow a way must be found to involve parents in their children's education.

Unfortunately, many underachieving students come from illiterate or underachieving parents — often several generations back. Education and hard work are not valued in many of these homes, and many have no concept of normal family life or success.

The schools cannot solve this problem alone. It is society's problem, and it will take a coordinated effort of government, social agencies, schools and concerned community leaders to even begin to make a dent

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

7-12-89

Reading party is creative idea, but parents must help

A unique slumber party at Earl Travillion school might just wake up some students to the pleasures of reading.

Last Friday night, several Earl Travillion students spent the night reading at the school under the watchful eyes of parents. The first of several Friday Night Prime Times began at 5 p.m. Friday and ended Saturday morning. During the night, students read for 30-minute periods, then took a break to play games or watch movies.

Earl Travillion principal Ervin Carr, who is directing the program, said children are encouraged to bring anything they want to read — books, comic books, newspapers or magazines.

"We are just trying to increase their appetite for reading," said Carr. "One of our goals is to whet students' appetites for reading so that they will become avid and proficient readers."

The program sounds to us like a good way to help children enjoy reading while providing them with a fun, wholesome night out. Unfortunately, only a handful of children took advantage of it.

A clue to the children's lack of participation may be found in the fact that the program, slated to begin June 30, had to be postponed because too few parents volunteered to supervise the students. If the parents are apathetic, it's not surprising that the students are. Even if young children are interesting in coming, they can't do so unless their parents are interested enough to bring them.

It is worth noting that participation has also been sparse in the Forrest County Schools' adult basic education courses, which Carr also directs. Carr said that during the 1988-89 school year only seven adults participated in the classes at South Forrest School, despite a high rate of illiteracy in the area, especially in the Palmers Crossing area where Earl Travillion is located.

A recent study of 6,000 people with less than a sixth grade education revealed that less than 1 percent had parents who had finished high school. Friday Night Prime Time is just one attempt to break that cycle, to help children enjoy reading and appreciate its value.

Additional Prime Time slumber parties are planned for this Friday, July 14, and the following Friday, July 21. We urge parents of Earl Travillion students to support this worthwhile project by volunteering to help or, at the very least, seeing that their children attend.

Encouraging their children to read could be the most valuable gift parents could ever give their children.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

7-16-89

Will illiteracy keep Mississippi last forever?

"Mississippi will never be last again."

The slogan has become Gov. Ray Mabus' battle cry. Certainly, most Mississippians are tired of being last in teachers' salaries, amount spent per pupil, per capita income ... the list goes on.

Increasingly, however, a direct correlation is becoming apparent between the long list of "lasts" and one important "first": Mississippi has the highest illiteracy rate in the nation.

Twenty-seven percent of the adults in Mississippi cannot read or write or compute well enough to function normally in society — to read instructions on a medicine bottle, locate a telephone number in the telephone directory, help a child with homework or fill out a job application.

Statewide, 45 percent of those age 25 or older do not have the equivalent of a high school diploma; 27 percent completed less than nine years of school. Closer to home, in the 11-county *Hattiesburg American* circulation area, 43 percent of adults have not completed high school; 34 percent have an eighth-grade education or less.

Welfare is the number one source of income in Mississippi. Ninety percent of all jobs require some reading, writing and computation. And the level of those skills needed is rising with each passing year, as business and industry move to more sophisticated technology to compete internationally. Many of the undereducated now employed will find themselves phased out of the workforce as the demands of available jobs surpass their skills.

Meanwhile, those who are working are paying ever-higher taxes to support all those on welfare.

Economic implications aside, illiteracy robs adults of dignity, keeps them out of the mainstream of society and perpetuates itself in succeeding generations.

What can be done? Family literacy projects, quality child care, worksite literacy programs all are promising approaches. Community literacy programs such as HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project Inc.), the schools' Adult Basic Skills and GED programs and others are helping. And a new federal law requiring recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children funds to attend school or job training could have a significant impact.

But despite these efforts, last year only 786 were enrolled in all literacy programs in Forrest County, although there are 6,868 adults with an eighth-grade education or less in the county.

At the same time, HELP — with a long waiting list of persons who want to learn to read — is desperate for funds and for volunteer tutors. And only one industry in the Hattiesburg area — Hercules — has a worksite literacy program.

What is needed is leadership — political, business, industrial, educational — and money to fund HELP and other literacy programs; more worksite literacy programs in area businesses and industries; and more volunteer tutors.

Beginning today, the American is running the first in a series of articles on the problem, what is being done and what needs to be done about it. We urge you to read every one.

We must all realize that eradicating illiteracy is our business — unless we plan on being last forever.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

8-23-89

Illiteracy forum gives chance for input, information

A recent *Hattiesburg American* series highlighted the tragic economic and social implications of illiteracy. It is not a pretty picture.

Mississippi leads the nation in illiteracy, with 27 percent of its adults unable to read well enough to read instructions on a medicine bottle, locate a number in the telephone directory, help a child with homework or fill out a job application.

Statewide, 45 percent of those age 25 and older do not have the equivalent of a high school diploma; 27 percent completed less than nine years of school. About 7,000 functionally illiterate persons live in Forrest County.

To get a realistic picture of why Mississippi is last in so many economic and educational areas, one must realize that welfare is the number one source of income in the state. Ninely percent of all jobs require some reading, writing and computations. And the level of these skills needed is rising with each passing year.

Unless more people get more concerned about doing something about adult literacy, more lower level employees will be losing their jobs to better-educated replacements. What's more, the problem will continue to be perpetuated in generation after generation.

But, what can be done and, more importantly, how will we do it?

Various approaches are being tried — one-on-one volunteer teaching, small group teaching, worksite literary programs and other methods. The important thing, however, is that a variety of people are becoming aware of the extent of illiteracy around them and are reaching out a helping hand.

One such group is the Young Lawyers Division of the South Central Mississippi Bar Association, which adopted adult illiteracy as its 1988 public service program and is continuing with that emphasis this year.

The group hosted a luncheon in October 1988 at which Mississippi's first lady Julie Mabus spoke on illiteracy, and has been active in recruiting volunteer tutors for HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project). Now they're sponsoring a town meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the Jackie Dole Sherill Community Center to educate the public on the problem of illiteracy and to get input on how it can be addressed.

Guest speakers will include Attorney General Mike Moore, Columbus architect Robert Ivy and Linda Maravilla, director of the Greater Columbus Learning Center, who will share what Columbus has done to improve its adult functional literacy rate.

This is a topic that should be of vital interest to every man, woman and child. The extent to which we either address or ignore it will, to a large extent, determine the quality of our lives and our grandchildren's lives in the future.

Illiteracy is not a condition that responds to a quick fix. Remedying it is slow and laborious and unglamorous. But it can be done.

We commend the Young Lawyers for sponsoring this forum. And we urge you to come to the Community Center tomorrow night and be among those who are working toward solutions to this problem that threatens the very livelihood of our state and its people.

HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

9-8-89

Fight illiteracy: Read to your child

"If you can read this, thank a teacher."

The familiar bumper sticker slogan serves as an important reminder to all of us. How easy it is to take for granted the ability to read — if we can read. And how impossible a goal it may seem if we can't.

Yet experts estimate that at least 23 million adults in the United States — 27 percent of Mississippians — are functionally illiterate. They cannot read or write or compute well enough to function normally in society. They can't read instructions on a medicine bottle, locate a telephone number in the telephone directory, help a child with homework or fill out a job application.

It stands to reason, then, that they can't read newspapers, generally written on about a 9th grade reading level. So, you may say, it's not hard to see why newspapers promote literacy or why today has been set aside as National Newspaper Literacy Day.

Yes, illiteracy is of concern to the newspaper industry. But no more than it should be to every other business and industry. Ninely percent of all jobs require some reading, writing and computation. As technology becomes more sophisticated, many of the undereducated now employed will find themselves phased out of the workforce. The pool of qualified workers will shrink, the welfare rolls will grow and the economy will suffer.

And that's not even taking into consideration the terrible toll illiteracy takes on human dignity and self-esteem.

What can be done? Many forces — national, state and local — are working to implement one-on-one literacy training, family and workplace literacy projects and other approaches. Locally, HELP (Hattiesburg Education Literacy Project) is desperately in need of funds and volunteers. For more information, call 583-2233.

But the best approach is prevention. Read to your children, introduce them to the joys of the written word and you will open doors to a better life for them. In today's *American*, we are running reviews of several books recommended for children by the American Library Association. We urge you to check out these or other books and read them to your children.

In so doing, you'll give them a priceless gift that'll reward them all the rest of their lives — the gift of literacy.

The Miami Herald

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Florida business hobbled by worker illiteracy

By DORY OWENS and ED LOPEZ
Herald Business Writers

At Motorola's South Florida manufacturing plants, 63 percent of a group of applicants for entry-level jobs flunked the company's hiring test. The reason: They couldn't pass a fifth-grade math test or a seventh-grade reading exam.

Miami's Burger King Corp., faced with workers who can't read simple words like *ketchup* or *mustard*, has switched to food wrappers with pictures of condiments instead of words.

Ryder System is installing a "literacy hot line" this summer in its Miami and Fort Lauderdale offices, in part to help mechanics who may have problems reading repair manuals as Ryder converts to high-tech work shops.

"I never dreamed 10 years ago that we would have reading, writing and arithmetic classes at Ryder," said Anthony Burns, the company's chairman.

He speaks for many Florida business people who view literacy as a critical issue for a state that hopes to be a leader in the space, defense, biomedical and information industries.

At a time when companies are demanding

PLEASE SEE **LITERACY, 18A**

LITERACY, *FROM* **1A**

higher skills of their workers than ever before, Florida has one of the worst literacy rates in the nation, partly because of large numbers of immigrants — many of whom can't read or write their own language, let alone English — and partly because of alarming high school dropout rates.

By almost any measure of education skills, Florida gets a failing grade. Consider:

- Twenty-six percent of the fifth graders who took the 1987 State Student Assessment Tests couldn't solve a simple math problem that involved making change from $1.
- One of seven Florida adults is functionally illiterate, reading at or below a fourth-grade level.
- The state's high school graduation rate is the nation's worst.

Florida's business leaders say the state's education system is failing them at every level, from grammar school through university programs, and they complain that Florida doesn't spend enough on education.

Florida isn't alone

"This state still does not have a commitment to buy itself the best education," said Dale Smith, the executive director of the Economic Council of Palm Beach County, a private organization that represents business interests in a broad range of issues.

"It's a mentality that Florida has to shake if it wants to grow beyond just being a fun place to be and expand the economic base."

The new state budget includes:

- $100,000 for each of several adult literacy centers operated at community colleges around the state: Miami-Dade, Daytona Beach, Brevard and Okaloosa-Walton.
- $100,000 for adult literacy centers operated by three school districts: Broward, Polk and Santa Rosa counties.

It also provides $20,000 for a pilot program, a "volunteer literacy corps." The location is undecided.

Florida is not the only state cranking out high school graduates who can't read or write. Each year, American high schools graduate 700,000 students who are functionally illiterate. Another 700,000 drop out.

Xerox Chairman David T. Kearns, who serves on Ryder's board, says American industry is spending as much as $25 billion each year to teach employees basic skills and to absorb lost productivity during on-the-job training.

The problem is so severe that Japanese companies opening plants in the United States have to hire college graduates to perform statistical work done by high school graduates in their own country.

Motorola spends an average of $250 per employee to train U.S. workers in quality control techniques using statistics. It costs Japanese competitors only 50 cents per worker.

Added training costs are making U.S. businesses less competitive. Eventually, America's work force may lose high-tech jobs the way it lost unskilled manufacturing jobs in the past two decades. In the meantime, the education gap makes goods more expensive for American consumers.

"The cost of training or retraining employees goes right into the product cost," said Pat Kelly, the manager of education at IBM's Boca Raton plant.

Skills levels falling

A study of the state's competitiveness completed last month for the Florida Chamber of Commerce found that the state's spending on higher education was below a number of national competitors. Florida wasn't even in the running with regional rivals Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Spending on elementary and secondary education didn't fare much better.

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The Miami Herald

"If current trends continue, Florida's businesses will have to either rely heavily on out-of-state recruiting, relocate out of state or face the fact that the skill levels of its work force will fall further and further behind those of other leading economies," said the chamber study.

Businesses can't afford to wait for the problem to disappear. A slowdown in population growth will tighten the labor supply in the 1990s, reducing the pool of available job applicants.

Faced with a growing number of unqualified applicants and workers whose skills are outdated by technological advancement, a few Florida companies are digging into their own pockets to teach employees the three R's and to upgrade their skills in preparation for an increasingly technical world.

Pratt & Whitney, an aircraft engine manufacturer, is spending $2 million to open a University of Florida branch in northern Palm Beach County.

"The reason we decided to do what we did was to get on the same playing field as other aerospace companies that we compete with out of state," said William Howden, vice president of Pratt's Government Products Division. Pratt's archrival, General Electric, has a plant located near the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge.

Harris Corp. launched a pilot program this year that provides basic skills instruction for employees at the company's Melbourne offices.

This summer Miami-based Ryder will launch a program in Miami and Fort Lauderdale that will allow employees anonymously to enlist volunteer tutors from outside the company for free help in math, reading and writing.

Work becomes complex

The transportation company created the Ryder Read program in part to prepare truck mechanics in its repair shops to use computerized diagnostic equipment and tools. The new shops will be installed over the next few years.

"In the old days, mechanics could be trained by standing next to someone else who was fixing a truck. Today you have to understand electronics, not just the electrical system," said Dick Gerlack, the director of program development at Ryder.

"It's going to require higher competency levels in reading and math. As the work becomes more complex, we have to make sure we have training in place to make sure they're able to do what we're asking."

The Broward County school system plans to offer basic skill instruction again this year to Motorola, which has a wide range of educational courses available to its employees at all levels.

Burger King has taken a different tack. The fast-food chain will soon launch one of the corporate "reach-out" programs that management consultants say will become more prevalent.

It will spend more than $1 million to open 11 Burger King Academies across the country in the next year. Each will serve about 125 students in alternative classrooms with close attention from teachers and other adults. The first of the schools will open in September at Miami's Temple Israel on Northeast 19th Street at Second Avenue.

The program will target potential high school dropouts and kids who have already dropped out. It will offer classroom instruction in the morning and vocational training at Burger King restaurants, the company's South Dade headquarters or at other companies in the afternoon.

Affects charity

Some of Florida's biggest corporate names are also emphasizing education in their charitable contributions. Barnett Banks has given $4.5 million to support education since 1987 while contributing only $150,000 to the arts.

Corporate giants aren't the only ones who have begun to deal with the problem.

Smaller companies also are seeking help in educating their workers. In Fort Lauderdale, North Beach Hospital hopes to enroll up to 15 employees in a basic skills program for maintenance and kitchen workers.

"Our dietary people couldn't read some of the directions for cooking," said Jay Adkins, the director of environmental services at the hospital.

Literacy experts say the partnership between business people and educators will grow stronger through the next decade.

"In the 1990s, you'll see more companies do this," said Bill Milliken, the president of Cities in Schools, a nonprofit, Washington-based organization devoted to dropout prevention. "I've always felt that industry had a moral or spiritual responsibility to care for these young people.

"But now, even if companies don't feel that way, they realize that, if they don't help, they're not going to have enough trained workers to fill the jobs that are going to be there."

San Antonio Light

SEPTEMBER 9, 1989

Illiteracy adds to jobless burden

By JODY BECKER
Staff reporter

■ SECOND IN A SERIES

If you can read this, or this - *si puede leer esto* - your chances of finding work in San Antonio are twice as good as if you cannot decipher either.

But for an estimated 47,600 San Antonians who speak only Spanish and cannot read and write in either Spanish or English, getting a good job or just getting by can be tough.

"It's what I call the dual dilemma," said Liz Garza, director of the literacy center at the Intercultural Development Research Association.

"When you are illiterate in your native language and don't know a second language, you can't even ask questions," she said. "You're operating orally and the rest of the world is functioning in another language.

"I guess the best word for it is scary."

Literacy experts say fluency in English generally is the best way to escape poverty.

Please turn to ILLITERACY/A6

SAN ANTONIO LIGHT

ILLITERACY: Jobless

ILLITERACY/from A1

A map of San Antonio showing areas with the greatest numbers of people with limited proficiency in English offers dramatic illustrations of its link with poverty.

In City Council District 5, on San Antonio's West Side, where 22 percent of the population has limited English proficiency, 35.9 percent of the population lives in poverty, according to statistics compiled by the research association.

In downtown Council District 1, 16 percent of the population has limited English proficiency, and 15 percent live in poverty.

But traditional routes to better job opportunities can frequently hit dead ends.

"There's a big push for people to earn their GED (General Equivalency Diploma), but even then they're not equipped for the job market," says JoAnne Peñuelaz, a social service worker at the West Side Parish Coalition. "We have people who aren't prepared in either English or Spanish."

Too often, the high school GED and English as a Second Language certifications are nothing more than documents of false hopes, Peñuelaz says.

Part of the problem is that job seekers who take the GED test in Spanish are not prepared to read, write or communicate verbally in a work situation, Peñuelaz says.

"They come in and show me an ESL certificate, and they still can't communicate with an employer," says Peñuelaz of some of the people who visit her office. "I find myself saying, 'You're still not proficient at the language, and I can't get you through the front door.' "

Job interviews are another hurdle.

"We will promote a very good candidate who can converse in English, but in an interview they'll be asked a question in English and then respond in Spanish," Peñuelaz says.

For those who do find employment without learning to read or write in English or Spanish, low-wage jobs can become traps.

"There are plenty of jobs out there for the (Spanish) monolingual person," Penuelaz says. "You can do construction, gardening, landscaping, meat packing or day care. But most employees with limited skills always want something higher."

In an attempt to turn the tide, the West Side Parish Coalition offers courses that focus on what Peñuelaz calls fundamental skills: 100 hours of math and language tutoring that serve as a foundation for more specific job skills.

The course covers everything, from expectations of employers to reading the classified advertisements for job opportunities and telephone techniques.

But the problem of basic language comprehension persists.

"You only learn how to read once," says Garza, the IDRA literacy director. "So trying to teach English to someone who doesn't have the basics in the primary language is difficult. If you have no skills to transfer. There is no grammar base. You don't know what a verb is."

San Antonio Light

SEPTEMBER 10, 1989

City enjoying first fruits of literacy effort

By JODY BECKER
Staff reporter

The story of San Antonio's commitment to teach its estimated 241,000 illiterate citizens how to read is epic novel material. It's the story of big money, a long struggle and a cast of determined characters.

▪ THIRD IN A SERIES

Since San Antonio voters approved a $5.8 million bond issue last May to support literacy efforts, one state-of-the-art learning center already is open and teaching 236 adults to read. And the grand plan is enough to fill a fat, first chapter:

- ■ An alternate site for a second center is being sought after plans to use classrooms at Cooper Middle School were scrapped due to space limitations.
- ■ A site-selection committee is targeting locations for nine more neighborhood learning centers expected to open within the next three years.
- ■ A citywide telephone referral service began taking calls in June, directing would-be readers to convenient classes.

City officials say the initial effort to choreograph literacy training citywide is a giant stride in the right direction.

"I just can't believe how far we've already come,"

Please turn to LITERACY/**A4**

LITERACY: Program targets thousands

LITERACY/from **A1**

says Councilwoman Yolanda Vera, who began to push for a city-sponsored literacy initiative in 1987.

The city decided to get into the business of teaching people how to read after taking a close look at the local business forecast.

"All the information I ever had about our work force showed we have already been impacted by the high level of illiteracy," Vera said. "One of the primary corporate concerns in locating a business is availability of a skilled work force, and I felt the city was in a good position to take a leading role."

> *Literacy helps people get away from poverty, drugs, alcohol abuse and criminal activity.*
>
> **– ROY KAISER**
> With municipal special projects

But Vera and other city officials say it will take time and patience for the literacy program to boost the local business climate.

"Until April of '87, the city had done really nothing about literacy or illiteracy problems," says Roy Kaiser, whose municipal special projects office is directing the literacy effort. "Literacy was not seen as a municipal and government problem, and little was done. Now our role is to give some credibility to a citywide effort, to help coordinate the 150 service providers."

Approximately 162,000 adults in San Antonio are functionally illiterate, according to the San Antonio Commission on Literacy. Another 79,000 are considered marginally illiterate – meaning more than one-fourth of San Antonio's adult population can't read or write beyond the eighth-grade level.

City officials say there is a direct connection between the numbers who can't read or understand the world around them, and those who rely on government resources for survival.

In City Council District 5, encompassing San Antonio's heavily Hispanic West Side, the problems are most pronounced. Of its population, 52.5 percent is illiterate, 22.4 percent have limited proficiency in English and 35.9 percent lives below the poverty level, according to statistics compiled by the city's Department of Human Services. The department has pegged the poverty range for a family of four at an annual income of $12,100 or less.

"In the long run, literacy helps people get away from poverty, drugs, alcohol abuse and criminal activity," Kaiser says. "What we have recognized is that illiteracy is more than just a problem of the education system and its cost to the public."

Some local literacy experts say the citywide estimate of the number of illiterate adults is deceptively low.

"That's how many they've been able to count, but so many have been able to camouflage it so well," says Barbara Hunt, program coordinator at the city's first literacy center at Our Lady of the Lake University.

Brandishing test results from two women who came to register for the program, Hunt pushes her point.

"Look at this," she says, "One of these women graduated from Sam Houston High, the other from Healy Murphy (alternative education program), and neither one can read better than a third-grader.

"These girls went to high school, and if you graduated from high school, you count as one of the literate."

Hunt says she has been dismayed to meet so many people with similar stories, but says the rewards of seeing her first three graduates nearing completion of the 20-week, 100-hour course later this month reminds her that the center is part of the solution.

Operating on a first-year budget of $240,000, the inaugural center uses the IBM Principles of the Alphabet Literacy Series (PALS) software, a high-tech web of computer- and laser disc-generated lessons that explain the origins of the alphabet.

Later, students are asked to use typewriters, workbooks and the advice of learning partners to master the language.

The pairing can be a crucial aid for many learning to read, Hunt says.

"If a person's knowledge is narrow, it narrows their whole scope, or makes them think the better things in life are for someone else," Hunt says. "It becomes important to share small goals."

As a single mother who completed her education after raising her children, Hunt has a special empathy for adult students.

"I went back to college at 34, so I can relate to what it is to sit in the classroom with 18-year-olds. And I have to remember a lot of it is economic. This is a last resort," she said. "Lots of high school graduates make it through as special education students, then get out into the real world and find they can't even fill out a job application.

"They just need a support system, and this is a good place to start."

It also is a place that makes a special effort to address illiteracy among Hispanics.

Recognizing that San Antonio's illiterate population is just a fraction of the 27 million in the nation who are functionally illiterate, Hunt and Kaiser gleaned ideas for municipally sponsored literacy efforts in Philadelphia and Atlanta, modifying the program to accommodate San Antonio's uniquely bilingual population.

SOURCE SAN ANTONIO LITERACY COUNCIL

"We're just starting to see more people come forward with the problem of not even being being able to read and write in their own language (Spanish), much less English," Hunt says. "We're working even on a case-by-case basis."

Special software to teach English as a second language to people who are literate in Spanish should be in the learning centers by next year, Hunt says.

San Antonio Light

SEPTEMBER 11, 1989

Conquering world word by word

By JODY BECKER
Education reporter

LAST IN A SERIES

Sam Reyes carries an elegant leather briefcase on his twice-weekly trips to the Las Palmas library on San Antonio's South Side.

For the high school dropout who works as a janitor at the Federal Building downtown, the briefcase doubles as a passport to the world of words – tucked inside are lessons Reyes pores over in his efforts to learn how to read.

Until six months ago, Reyes scraped by with second-grade reading skills. He had a job, but no opportunity to get ahead. He has a son, but he never had read a book to him.

"I even got stuck sometimes on words like 'the'," he said.

Now Reyes meets every Monday and Wednesday with his tutor, Eileen Crowder, for a one-on-one session, arranged through the Bexar County Women's Center.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Reyes attends class to work toward his high school equivalency diploma. On Saturdays, he accompanies his 3-year-old son, Sam Jr., and a nephew to the library to pick out books and play read-

Please turn to LITERACY/**A6**

San Antonio Light
A6/MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1989

LITERACY: Determination pays word by word

SAN ANTONIO LIGHT

LITERACY/from **A1**

ing games on a computer.

Most of Reyes' time with Crowder is spent on the workbooks and lessons focusing on the basics of reading and comprehension, simple exercises based on topics like cats and Pinocchio and sneezing. Crowder supplements the lessons with real-life scenarios - mock notes that might pass between Sam and his supervisor at work.

"Sam: What is wrong with the restroom on the the third floor? Call and let me know at once (or leave a note with my secretary). The ashtrays on the ninth floor were not emptied. Please take care of them before cleaning second, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth floors today."

Reyes writes back, "Everything is OK! No supplies or repairs needed."

Crowder, a retired schoolteacher, said Reyes is an "ideal student. The sky is the limit for Sam. He will be a success as an executive or even mayor."

For now, he is concentrating on getting a better job, one word at a time.

"I'm not ashamed to admit to people that I'm in this program and I tell my young friends, at one time I didn't know how to spell 'important'," said Reyes.

"But I got tired of watching TV. I wanted to be able to read to my kid," he said.

Reyes also wants to be the boss, but too many times his inability to read has come between him and a better job.

"I knew I needed a tutor. Because I could've been a supervisor by now - I just didn't know how to spell," he said.

With minimal reading skills and a good memory, Reyes worked for years as a floor-care supervisor at Wilford Hall Air Force Medical Center, where he mixed chemicals and solvents using his eyes and nose as a guide.

Like thousands of illiterate adults, Reyes negotiated in a world of words by using symbols and signs to decipher material he could not read - visual cues such as McDonald's golden arches or the Nutrasweet trademark swirl that are part of marketing strategies aimed at illiterate consumers.

> *The sky is the limit for Sam. He will be a success as an executive or even mayor.*
>
> **– EILEEN CROWDER**
> Tutor

"The whole concept of logos like the arches, the Coca-Cola logo are all specifically designed because they know they are catering to a market where big numbers could not read," said Scott Baird, a linguistics professor at Trinity University.

"It's strictly an economic reaction to the reality that large numbers of people cannot read and never could," he said.

Baird said the visual cues actually are helpful in teaching people to read, and do not necessarily indicate the creeping obsolescence of written language.

"It's really very, very helpful," said Baird of the symbols. "Real language is spoken and picked up with the ear. What's artificial is slowing it down with the hand and the eye. Anything visual encourages the more linear thought."

But visual symbols also can make the need to read less urgent.

When he was laid off last year from Wilford Hall, Reyes went to work in the Federal Building, but his eroding part-time hours do not pay enough to support his family, so he is trying to get back to Wilford Hall, this time as a supervisor.

Reyes made it through the ninth grade at Lanier High School, but said he dropped out when he got involved with the "wrong crowd."

He later joined the Job Corps, training to be a professional painter. But he fudged his way on the academic part of the program.

"I really cheated on myself," Reyes said. "I would look in the back for the answers."

When he called the women's center for help earlier this year, Reyes insisted on being placed in a beginner's course, although he could read a little.

"When I signed up for this I signed up at the bottom so I could find out where the loopholes were," Reyes said.

He is finding them. Although Crowder described his attitude and progress as outstanding, there are rough spots. Last week he tripped up on the word "notify."

But Crowder makes an effort to point out what he has mastered. Like the longest word in the dictionary, antidisestablishmentarianism.

"You'll probably never use this word," she told Reyes during a recent tutoring session, "but you could if you needed to, just like any word you meet."

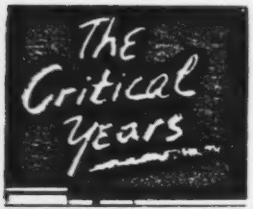
At home, Reyes has transformed one corner of his tiny bedroom into a study.

A set of red, leather-bound encyclopedias lines the desk. On one corner a heap of children's library books are balanced against a stack of notebooks and paper.

But the briefcase, awarded to Reyes by the women's center for his phenomenal progress, is his special joy.

Ihe Critical Years: City kids behind at the start

Chicago Sun-Times



As part of its yearlong exploration of education is- ues, the Chicago Sun-Times ook a close look at the criti- al years: the preschool and arly primary grade years, he years that can lay the undation for failure or suc- ess.

Education writer Linda enz and reporters William raden, Don Hayner, Alf iewers and Neil Steinberg urveyed Chicago public hool kindergarten teach- rs, reviewed decades of re- arch and interviewed chil- ren, parents, educators and xperts in early childhood ducation.

Expanded preschool edu- ation programs have been a ey recommendation in the ngoing push for reform of hicago's public schools. But he Sun-Times team found hat focusing on preschool ducation is not enough. Many early childhood ex- erts believe the critical ears for learning begin at irth. Many say that lifelong atterns for failure or suc- ess may be set by age 3, and ertainly by age 8.

The Sun-Times' five-part eries appeared June 26 hrough June 30, 1988.

By William Braden

Most children enter the Chicago public school system unable to speak in complete simple sentences. Unable to identify a square, circle and triangle. Unable to tell you their first and last names.

Most cannot sit still to listen to a brief story, nor can they tell a brief story with a beginning, a middle and an end.

Most cannot correctly hold a pencil or crayon, nor can they draw a recognizable complete human figure.

In suburban Wilmette, by comparison, the vast majority of children entering public school can perform all of those tasks.

In Chicago, most children starting public school have not been read to by their parents. And most have never been to a zoo, library or museum.

In Wilmette, the vast majority of children starting public school have been read to by their parents. And almost all have been to a zoo, library or museum.

Those are among the findings of a Chicago Sun-Times study designed to gauge the importance for education of "the critical years"—the preschool and early primary grade years.

The study shows that Chicago's public schools are overwhelmed with children who start school unprepared to do traditional schoolwork; this is especially so in low-income areas.

The study demonstrates that low-income children during the critical years may benefit significantly from preschool programs.

The study also underscores the crucial role of parenting in academic success; it shows that most parents—including low-income parents—very much want such success for their children but that many lack the skills to help the children achieve it.

Discussing the findings, philanthropist Irving Harris said:

"The sad thing is, these kids are not only illiterate—they're incompetent. There's a difference. You don't have to be literate to have common sense and be able to do things. But many of these kids are brought up to be quite incompetent."

The study is based on a Sun-Times survey of Chicago public kindergarten teachers that was conducted May 20-26, 1988, along with a comparison survey of Wilmette kindergarten teachers.

The sharp disparity between Chicago and affluent Wilmette isn't the children's fault. Rather, it dramatizes the impact of socioeconomic status on children's readiness for school. And it shows how far behind Chicago public school pupils are when they start out, compared with where they should or could be.

In Chicago, 74 percent of the pupils in the survey were from low-income families (compared with 4 percent in Wilmette). And the Chicago teachers estimated that 44 percent of the low-income children were unprepared to start school. Citywide, 42 percent were judged unprepared.

The most frequently cited causes of unpreparedness—in order—were lack of social skills, poor attention span, lack of language skills and poor fine-motor skills.

Among Chicago public kindergartners in the survey:

- 52 percent could not speak in complete simple sentences, compared with 8 percent in Wilmette.
- 59 percent could not identify a square, circle and triangle, compared with 18 percent in Wilmette.
- 51 percent could not tell you their first and last names, compared with 3 percent in Wilmette.
- 51 percent could not sit still to listen to a brief story, compared with 13 percent in Wilmette.
- 74 percent could not tell a brief story that contains roughly a beginning, a middle and an end, compared with 39 percent in Wilmette.
- 52 percent could not not correctly hold a pencil or crayon, compared with 35 percent in Wilmette.
- 55 percent could not draw a recognizable complete human figure, such as a stick figure, compared with 24 percent in Wilmette.
- 50 percent could not identify the primary colors of red, blue and yellow, compared with 10 percent in Wilmette.
- 56 percent could not settle disputes with other children without physical aggression, compared with 30 percent in Wilmette.
- 32 percent seemed to lack self-esteem, compared with 24 percent in Wilmette.

(Among low-income Chicago pupils, the rates of failure were even higher than they were citywide.)

There is far from universal agreement on the significance of all these categories as predictors of academic success.

For example, many Chicago teachers express dismay at the apparent inability of so many children to tell you their first and last names. In many cases, say the teachers, children start kindergarten knowing only their family

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THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 1

City kids behind at start

Continued from Page 1

nicknames. But this does not disturb Barbara Bowman, an authority on early childhood education at Chicago's Erikson Institute.

"It's probably a cultural difference," said Bowman.

"My best guess is that these kids tend to live in communities in which people know one another much more intimately, and they have less experience telling people their names."

The children quickly learn to recite the names on their birth certificates, said Bowman.

And there's a problem only if teachers interpret the initial failure as a sign of stupidity—and lower their expectations for pupil performance.

There's a real danger teachers will interpret it that way, of course.

In any case, the study results taken as a whole clearly demonstrate that most public school children in Chicago start off unprepared for traditional schoolwork.

Inability to speak in complete simple sentences, for example, might signal that a child has not developed sufficient language structure to understand the teacher's instructions. Inability to hold a pencil or crayon could in some cases suggest poorly developed fine-motor skills. Inability to identify primary colors might indicate absence of a language environment in which people talk about the colors of things.

What the study really demonstrates is the cruel impact of poverty in Chicago, where almost 8 of 10 public elementary school pupils are poor.

And it raises the possibility that the decline in academic achievement here in recent decades does not necessarily reflect a collapse of the educational system so much as a dramatic change in the nature of the pupil population: the emergence of a chronically poor underclass of largely one-parent families, many of them headed by teenage girls with few parenting skills.

"All except one child in my class of 24 comes from a one-parent family," wrote one of the kindergarten teachers surveyed.

"The parents are kids themselves," another teacher wrote.

"Most of the women that we've talked to at the Robert Taylor Homes don't even know they're pregnant until they're four or five months along," said Harris, sponsor of the innovative Beethoven Project to support families in the Taylor homes area.

"We're talking about a failed social policy," said Chicago Schools Supt. Manford Byrd Jr.

"We cannot continue years and years of neglect of families and failing to support them and simply think that we can build a schoolhouse and take their children in and their children will equal the output of children everywhere."

"It's remedial when you spend later on. It makes more sense, and is cheaper, to build than to mend."

Sanders, a longtime advocate of expanded state support for preschool, said:

"Anybody who reads the numbers in this survey ought to be persuaded of the importance of these programs and the fact they can make a difference."

Sanders said educators should make the school system more responsive to the needs of low-income children. But that is not enough, he said.

And he singled out what he called "the devastating statistic" in the study that shows 95 percent preschool participation in Wilmette compared with 41 percent in Chicago.

"It's a matter of economics," he said.

"The parents whose children most need this advantage can't afford it, and, therefore, can't access it unless it is publicly made available for them.

"And the earlier we get to these children, the better off we'll be. Instead of just trying to offset their deficits when they get to school, we should be trying to accelerate their development when they're younger."

But this doesn't take schools off the hook, Byrd agreed. Ted Sanders, the Illinois education superintendent, agreed.

"The schools aren't prepared to deal with the children who come to them," said Sanders, reacting to the Sun-Times study. "The survey shows that 44 percent of low-income children are markedly behind their peers developmentally when they arrive at the schoolhouse door. That's not a child's failure. But the school system fails because it is not prepared to deal with him when he shows up.

"The schools are not adjusting to deal with the range of developmental levels. And it becomes easy to let these children fall by the wayside."

But Byrd and Sanders said the Sun-Times survey also provides clear evidence that preschool education can play a significant role in offsetting the effects of poverty.

Manford Byrd Jr.

"The findings really support the notion that preschool can help kids do better," said Byrd. "I'm a firm believer in preschool education for kids who would otherwise start out behind and maybe never really make up the difference. Dollars are better spent early on than later on. It's developmental when you start early on.

How Sun-Times study was conducted

This Chicago Sun-Times study is based on responses to a first-ever questionnaire distributed to a random sample of kindergarten teachers in the Chicago public schools.

Questionnaires were sent to 285 teachers, and 196 (69 percent) responded.

Those responding teach 7,122 children, or 24 percent of kindergarten enrollment citywide.

For comparison, the 45-item questionnaire was sent as well to Wilmette's six kindergarten teachers. Four responded.

The questionnaire was designed by Sun-Times reporters Don Hayner, Linda Lenz, William Braden, Alf Siewers and Neil Steinberg with the help of the Board of Education research department, early childhood specialists at the Erikson Institute and psychologist Joan Costello, faculty associate at the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

It was then refined in focus group sessions with outstanding kindergarten and preschool teachers, identified by the specialists.

A pretest was conducted with 27 teachers in Districts 3 on the North Side and District 4 on the West Side.

The questionnaires were distributed through the Board of Education's internal mail system on May 20.

Cover letters asked teachers to return them to their principals in sealed envelopes provided by the Sun-Times. Reporters spread out over the city May 26 to pick up completed questionnaires.

Teachers were asked to give the total number of children they teach and then estimate what percentage could do various things, such as count five objects, at the beginning of the school year. Teachers also were asked to estimate what percentage of children had parents who did various things associated with learning, such as reading to them.

The questionnaire also sought teachers' assessments of the effects of preschool. And it asked them to estimate how much of their own money they spent on their classes this school year.

The total: $46,808, or an average of $238.

Systemwide percentages were obtained through computer analysis.

Pupils were designated low-income if they were in classes where teachers said 70 to 100 percent of their children were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. This group represented 74 percent of the sample. The School Board pegs the low-income enrollment in elementary schools at 78 percent.

For evaluation purposes, the Sun-Times identified classes as "preschool classes" if teachers said a majority of their children had attended preschool.

Linda Lenz

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Preschool can benefit low-income children

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 2

By Linda Lenz
and William Braden

The temperature was pushing 90. The air-conditioning was out. But hat didn't faze the 4-year-olds in he Woodson South Child Parent Center on the South Side. They were on.

At the math table, five were engaged in a serious game of war. That's the card game where everyne draws a card and the player with the highest number gets to coop up all the other cards. At Woodson, the game is called more," after the concept being taught."

At the neighboring "writing" ta-le, a boy and a girl were drawing ictures and embellishing them with scribbles. The boy then "read" is story to a teacher aide, who rinted it for him.

In the corner playhouse, three oys were taking plastic vegetables, uits and meats out of cupboards. ach piece had its place, marked ith a picture and the name of the od. That way, when it came time put the food away, the boys were rawn into the mental activities of atching and making a connection etween the food and its name as it opears in print.

Elsewhere, youngsters were ainting at easels, pasting collages, aging through books and making ains and bridges out of blocks nd construction toys.

Surveying this noisy, multi-ring rcus, Jacquelynne Gilmore, principal of the child parent center and s home school, Woodson South, niled and said: "They're learning. hey're learning through play."

Woodson is situated in one of the poorest communities in Chicago. For want of money, time or know-how, parents there don't provide the environment for learning that typifies middle-class homes.

The Board of Education's child parent centers; the new state-funded preschool program; Head Start, and a variety of community preschool programs are helping fill in the gap for about 40 percent of such families, a Chicago Sun-Times study shows.

According to a random sample of Chicago public school kindergarten teachers, 69 percent of low-income children with preschool were prepared for kindergarten, while only 46 percent of low-income children without preschool were prepared.

The same picture emerged when teachers were asked to report how many of their pupils could do specific things. For example:

■ More than 5 out of 10 children with preschool could tell their teachers both their first and last names and could speak in complete, simple sentences. For children without preschool, the ratio was less than 4 in 10.

■ 6 out of 10 children with preschool could identify the colors red, blue and yellow. For children without preschool, the ratio was 4 in 10.

■ More than 5 out of 10 children with preschool could draw a recognizable complete human figure, such as a stick figure. For children without preschool, the ratio was slightly more than 3 in 10.

These and other tasks on the Sun-Times questionnaire were suggested by early childhood specialists and classroom teachers as indicators whether children had received the kind of verbal and mental stimulation that prepares them for school.

While preschool helped, it did not bring low-income children up to the level of middle-income children. On only one item did poor children with preschool come out as well as middle-income children—

26 percent could print their first and last names, compared to 17 percent of the more affluent children.

The value of preschool for children from low-income homes was underscored again when teachers were asked if kindergartners with preschool stayed ahead of their non-preschool classmates through-

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Preschool helps poor kids

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 2

Continued from Page 3

out the school year.

In cognitive, or thinking, activities, 39 percent of the teachers said children with preschool were ahead a lot and another 33 percent said they were ahead a little.

Twenty percent said there was no difference between the two groups, and 8 percent said children with preschool were behind.

Child parent centers in particular received a vote of confidence.

Fifty-seven percent of teachers whose classes had a majority of such youngsters said pupils with preschool were a lot ahead of their non-preschool classmates in cognitive activities. Another 19 percent said they were ahead a little.

A similar—but weaker—pattern emerged when teachers rated the social behavior of children who attended preschool: Youngsters with preschool tended to do better—but not as much better as they did in cognitive activities—and children who had attended child parent center preschools did best of all.

Child parent centers are the Cadillac of Chicago school programs. Created 21 years ago with the first gush of federal "War on Poverty" funds, they consist of four to 11 classes of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds served by a head teacher, a clerk, a parent resource teacher, a school-community liasion, classroom teachers and several classroom aides (though not one for every classroom). Class size is limited to 20, and classrooms are amply equipped.

Compare that to the description of a kindergarten that one teacher scrawled across the Sun-Times questionnaire:

"There are over 30 children with one teacher and an aide, assigned for 45 minutes daily. My budget totals $40 for next year. If I want materials I have to rely on proceeds from doughnut sales or my own funds."

The Head Start and state-funded preschool programs have staffing similar to that in child parent centers. But because classes are dispersed—with no more than two to a school—they don't have the benefit of full-time, on-site supervision and support, except for the principal.

Child-parent centers stand out not only for their resources but also for the steps they take to bolster parents, help them help their children and, in the process, establish a good relationship between home and school.

Parent rooms are the site of lessons in crafts, child development, everyday economics, high school subjects and English.

Children aren't accepted for the program unless parents promise to participate and serve as volunteer helpers in their children's classrooms.

Marilyn Flores goes daily to the parent room at the Von Humboldt Child Parent Center, 1345 N. Rockwell, where two of her children are enrolled. There she has learned how to sew, make artificial flowers and create activity books for her children.

She has learned important lessons from her children's teachers, too, like: Hitting children does not help them learn.

"I used to hit my child," said Flores. "My son's teacher taught me [not to] . . . . She was so patient. I wanted to be patient, too."

Marina Montijo, who has three children at the Von Humboldt center, said she's learned how to play with her children in a way that helps them learn.

"You have to be like a child," she said.

"You can't just sit there. You have to work with them, go on the floor with them, be a child just like them. They enjoy that."

In turn, Montijo is teaching her husband what she has learned about interacting with children.

"I tell him to ask the kids questions, and he does," she said.

"He asks the kids questions and they get involved."

The enthusiasm of Flores and Montijo illustrate a theory early childhood experts have about the preschool advantage: Parents who enroll their children probably are more supportive to begin with, as suggested by the fact that they enrolled their children.

Like many other school programs, child parent centers have suffered from budget cuts. At one time they were served by their own teams of social workers, speech therapists and nurses.

At one time they also extended through third grade instead of just kindergarten. Older children who had enrolled as 3-year-olds scored at the national average on reading tests, board officials say.

But that success became the program's undoing in the early primary grades.

In 1974, the year the program won official recognition as a national model, the federal government cut off funding for grades one, two and three. The children in these grades were no longer educationally disadvantaged, the feds argued, and therefore were not entitled to money earmarked for the disadvantaged.

While the Sun-Times study makes a case for child parent centers and other early intervention programs, controversy has dogged most research on the effectiveness of preschool—and especially so the many years of study on the federal government's Head Start program.

Project Head Start was launched in 1965, as part of the War on Poverty, to provide preschool experience for low-income children.

In 1969, a major study by the Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio State University concluded that the program produced no lasting benefits and was not worth the cost.

More recently, Head Start commissioned a massive survey that examined every study ever done of the program, published and unpublished. The result was the Synthesis Project, which concluded in 1985 that:

- Head Start pupils enjoy significant immediate gains in intellectual ability as measured by IQ and achievement test scores.
- Two years after Head Start, low-income children who did not take part in Head Start catch up with the Head Start children. The Head Start children do not regress. But they do not maintain their advantage in IQ and test scores.

The Synthesis survey reported that a few studies do find evidence of some long-term effects: that Head Start alums down the line are less likely to be retained in grade and less likely to be placed in special education classes.

Such long-term benefits also were found by the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies at Cornell University (1983), which analyzed the impact of 11 experimental early-intervention programs.

But only two of those programs were Head Start programs. The others were privately sponsored initiatives that were well-funded and professionally staffed. And one of those was the widely publicized Perry Preschool Project conducted by David Weikart in Ypsilanti, Mich.

The Perry project produced "real life" gains that have lasted more than two decades—including a reduced delinquency and arrest rate, a reduced teenage pregnancy rate, an increased employment rate at age 19 and a decreased rate of welfare dependency at age 19. And its sponsors estimate that every dollar spent on the experimental project saved up to $6 in social costs.

Head Start advocates argue that a preschool program can not provide a one-shot inoculation that will carry children successfully through all their years of schooling.

"I think the data tell us that Head Start does a very effective job of preparing children for public school," said Allen N. Smith, a research psychologist who served as

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 2

Preschool helps poor kids

government project officer for the Synthesis survey. "I think the public school does not do an equally good job of dealing with those children."

Smith added:

"What is needed really is more emphasis on public school activities that would allow for the same level of growth that children attained when they were in Head Start. And we have been working with public school systems in the last year or two to develop transition-oriented programs that would in fact enhance that kind of continuity in academic stimulation."

But the federal government actually started trying that back in 1967, when it introduced a national program called Project Follow Through to build on the gains children had made in Head Start.

The project was supposed to be a major service program, as extensive as Head Start, that would extend educational intervention through third grade.

Follow Through still has its ardent champions, who say it has produced some excellent individual programs. But the over-all operation didn't live up to expectations. And it survives today only at a much-reduced level of funding.

What's the bottom line here?

Some advocates of early intervention suggest that programs including Head Start don't start soon enough.

That case is argued by Burton L. White, director of the Center for Parent Education in Newton, Mass., and author of The First Three Years of Life.

By age 3, said White, most children headed for scholastic difficulty are already significantly behind their peers in intellectual and linguistic skills.

"Good language acquisition is the best single indicator of brain power," he said. "And poor language acquisition is the single most common problem associated with underachievement in school."

White continued:

"There is no language ability at birth. A child by age 1 may understand five to 10 words and a few instructions like 'wave bye-bye.'

By age 3, the average child understands roughly 70 percent of everything he's going to use in ordinary conversation for his entire lifetime.

"The child who is delayed at age 3 when he enters Head Start invariably, with virtually no exceptions, is behind on language. And if he's nine months or more behind on language, the chances are very good he'll never be an average student. Ever.

"The probability that any Head Start program is going to make him even average is very, very low."

White said "modest success" can be achieved under special conditions by a few well-funded and highly sophisticated programs like Perry Preschool. But such remediation, he said, is very expensive, hard to do—and, even under the best of circumstances, unlikely to completely reverse early losses.

Others, including Lisbeth B. Schorr, view preschool success stories as far from modest.

Looking at the same data, in her book Within Our Reach, Schorr writes of "two decades of dazzling successes in providing care and education for disadvantaged preschool children."

She pronounces Head Start "one of the most successful legacies of the War on Poverty," and she concludes: "The basic Head Start model has proved to be sound . . . The results are measurable and dramatic."

The middle ground is taken by Perry Preschool's Weikart and his High/Scope colleague, Lawrence J. Schweinhart, who criticize the Synthesis survey for lumping together all Head Start projects.

"Despite what Allen Smith says," said Schweinhart, "I don't think you can draw any conclusions about a national project with the variety in it of Head Start. You can't say unequivocably that Head Start works or Head Start doesn't work.

"You've got good Head Start programs, and you've got bad ones. You can say that's it's hard to find long-term effects, that there are very few longitudinal studies, that the study designs are generally not good enough to find long-term effects.

"But you can't go beyond that and make general claims about Head Start."

Weikart and Schweinhart even object to enthusiasts who say that the Perry Preschool track record proves that Head Start works, or that preschool works.

That record, they say, proves only that a preschool program can work—if it is a quality program with adequate funding, a skilled staff and a carefully planned curriculum.

They add that high-risk children deserve such programs—and White agrees—because preschool has now become the norm for children in this country, which is supposed to be a country of equal educational opportunity. As Weikart and Schweinhart put it:

"The majority of parents who can afford to enroll their children in preschool programs do so, and they seem to do so regardless of the weight of evidence on program effectiveness . . . . Therefore, program effectiveness aside, preschool program participation for low-income children is an issue of *equity*."

Alf Siewers also contributed to this story.

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 2

Analysis shows preschool plan still falls short

By Linda Lenz

Gov. Thompson's proposed state spending plans, which bank on a uncertain tax increase, would increase by about 60 percent the number of youngsters in Chicago public school preschool programs, a **Chicago Sun--Times** analysis shows.

But even with that increase, only about 37 percent of eligible youngsters could be served.

Moreover, there are no plans to alleviate two problems the programs encounter: finding space in overcrowded, largely Hispanic neighborhoods, which are underserved, and accommodating the schedules of working parents.

This school year, the state spent $12.7 million on preschool instruction. Thompson wants to spend $46 million next year. For Chicago, that could mean an extra $15 million, which would lift the system's preschool budget to about $40 million for 1988-89.

About an extra 6,300 children could be served, totaling some 17,000, or 37 percent of the low-income 3- and 4-year-olds headed for Chicago kindergartens, the Sun-Times analysis shows.

Board of Education preschool instruction currently serves some 10,500 youngsters, or about 23 percent of the at-risk 3- and 4-year--olds. The cost is about $2,300 a child in half-day attendance, or about twice the cost for instruction systemwide.

The Board of Education has no data on the number of kindergartners who attend preschool programs operated outside the system. (Half of the city's Head Start programs, for example, are operated by churches and community groups.)

But kindergarten teachers responding to a Sun-Times survey estimated that about 40 percent of their low-income youngsters had some kind of school experience before kindergarten.

The shortchanging of Hispanics can be seen by comparing their share of Chicago public school kindergarten enrollment—27 percent—to their share of preschool enrollment—19 percent.

Asked about the discrepancy, Chicago School Supt. Manford Byrd Jr. said the state should earmark some preschool money to build prefabricated classrooms in overcrowded neighborhoods.

The Illinois Day Care Action Council is especially critical of the state for focusing on half-day programs, which create problems for working parents who must arrange for the rest of the day.

Mary Whelan, chairman of the council's advocacy committee, also said the parent classes, considered crucial by child development experts, should be offered in evenings, as well.

Furthermore, she added, the state should take steps to tie its preschool programs to other social services that communities offer.

Attendance at preschool: No edge for middle class

The Chicago Sun-Times study of early childhood education demonstrates that low-income children with preschool experience start school better prepared than low-income children who don't attend preschool.

However, the study provides no clear evidence that preschool offers an advantage for middle-class children.

Educators suggest middle-class children without preschool may do as well as their middle-class peers with preschool because their home environments are as educationally stimulating as preschools. That same point was made by several Chicago kindergarten teachers responding to a Sun-Times survey.

"All of my children come from upper-middle-class homes," wrote Elaine Kaneshiro, who teaches at Edgebrook Elementary School 6525 N. Hiawatha, and Wildwood Elementary School, 6950 N. Hiawatha. "Most of them are involved in learning through play at home and are involved in conversation and are introduced to many, varied experiences. With a good family background such as this, preschool is not crucial to the success of the child."

William Braden

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Analysis shows preschool plan still falls short

New twist: merging day care, education

By Alf Siewers

Some call it the fruit of hard economic times. Some call it "the Sovietization of the American family." Others see it as part of a liberation of women. For most, it's becoming just a way of life.

Whatever the cause, U.S. families are becoming more dependent on non-family care for babies and toddlers than ever before.

And legislators, parents and educators are grappling with ways to merge preschool facilities and day care into what could be a new phase of public education that starts at birth.

In Illinois, some 100,000 children, most younger than 6, qualify for state day care subsidies because of income requirements and working parents, said Thomas Villiger of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

But currently there are only some 18,000 full-time spaces for such children in state-subsidized day care programs.

Jerome Stermer, president of the Voices for Illinois Children advocacy group, noted that as publicly funded preschool and day care facilities increase, they will need to sort out their their respective roles more than ever before.

"It doesn't make sense to have children riding buses between preschool and day care programs," Stermer said. "We're going to be challenged to rethink the integration of child care and education."

Some preschool advocates for low-income children have expressed concern that they may be competing for public dollars with advocates of public funding of day care for middle-class working mothers.

Related issues being grappled with in Springfield and across the country also include paid maternity and paternity leaves and exploring the possibility of involving the elderly more in child care programs.

One federal proposal endorsed by preschool expert Burton White would provide tax-credit payments to all families of preschool children, even those who keep children at home, with larger amounts going to lower-income parents.

"Most children get a better start in life when, during the majority of their waking hours of their first three years, they are cared for by their parents or other nuclear family members, not by any form of substitute care," White wrote in his book *The First Three Years of Life*.

Stermer said, "I think we should be looking at both approaches. . . . If people are financially able, we ought to provide incentives for parents to be with their young children full time."

THE CRITICAL YEARS Part 1

The play's the thing in kindergarten

By Linda Lenz

On Monday, Nancy Hanvey wrote the number 173 on a piece of paper and stuck it high on a wall of her kindergarten classroom at Kozminski Elementary School, 936 E. 54th.

It was the 173rd day of the school year and the 173rd number Hanvey had posted in a row that stretches the length of two walls.

On the 100th day, pupils brought in 100 pieces of this and that—pennies and pins, buttons and baubles—for a 100-day celebration.

Through this simple exercise, children begin to get a sense of the passage of time, of what big numbers mean and of striving for a goal, like day 100, Hanvey explained.

"No big deal is made of it," she said. "They sort of internalize it."

The daily posting in Hanvey's classroom is one of hundreds of activities in a new math program that produced startling results during a tryout with 130 kindergartners in Chicago's inner city and several of its affluent suburbs.

At the beginning of the 1986-87 school year, the inner-city children did about half as well as their suburban counterparts on a variety of math tasks. At the end of the year, both groups had made substantial gains, with the inner-city children moving up to 80 percent of the performance level of the suburban children.

"I've been just amazed at how much little children can do and how much they want to do," said Hanvey, a co-author of the program. "At one time I didn't think they could count to 100. I thought it was impossible."

One morning last month, Hanvey's pupils, most of whom attended preschool, also were doing division with ice cream bar sticks and drawing their own story problems on slates

Called Kindergarten Everyday Mathematics—KEM for short—the program is one product of the multimillion-dollar University of Chicago School Mathematics Project, which seeks to overhaul how mathematics is taught in American schools.

Beyond that, KEM illustrates a push by scholars in various disciplines, including reading, writing and science, to reshape teaching in the early grades so that it makes a better connection with the minds of young children, especially disadvantaged young children.

Echoing early childhood specialists, leading researchers in these fields decry a pervasive focus on rote skills, a reliance on paper-and-pencil exercises and a disregard for the knowledge children bring to class.

Here are some examples of what they don't like:

■ The scene was a Northwest Side kindergarten, but it could have been just about anywhere in the state. Children were sitting at desks, hunched over pieces of paper printed with dots and numbers. The children connected the dots, and everyone got a sticker for finishing the task without help.

But first they had a debate: Was the dot picture a muffin, vanilla ice cream or a banana split? "It's a cupcake," the teacher said, settling the dispute.

Then the children printed "cake" next to their pictures.

Next came worksheets requiring children to write out the names of numbers. And, finally, there were Mother's Day pictures to be colored.

■ Meanwhile, kindergartners at a North Side school took turns writing the numbers 1 to 50 in squares of a grid the teacher had drawn on a piece of poster board. Then the youngsters filled in their own grids, using the poster as a model.

■ At a South Side school, children were poring over pairs of pictures and letters—for example, a drawing of a bear with the letters s, t and b below it. The task: Circle the letter that makes the sound at the beginning of the word that the picture represents.

Both math and reading experts lament this approach to the basics.

"Math in school is so divorced from children's lives," said Jean Bell, a University

Vacation spoils kids' progress

By Linda Lenz

Chicago's public schools ran longer in 1988 to make up for a 19-day strike that also scratched part of winter break and all of spring break.

Yet, Nancy Hanvey, a kindergarten teacher at Kozminski Elementary School, 936 E. 54th, greeted summer vacation with a tinge of regret.

"Kindergartners and first-graders lose so much during those two months unless they have support at home," she said.

And the school system provides a stopgap for only a relative few. Its summer school program this year served only about a tenth of disadvantaged elementary school pupils.

In a recent report, the Ford Foundation described the summer loss in learning "a critical factor in children's long-term performance."

"When school is in session, advantaged and disadvantaged children learn at about the same rate," Gordon Berlin and Andrew Sum write in *Toward a More Perfect Union: Basic Skills, Poor Families and Our Economic Future.*

"But during the summer months when schools are closed, home and peer influences reassert themselves. At the end of the summer, advantaged children actually score higher on a standardized test then they did when the summer started, while disadvantaged children fall further behind."

The report cites studies suggesting an estimated 80 percent of the extra learning that advantaged children attain from year to year occurs during the summer.

Berlin and Sum offer this explanation: "In advantaged homes, children are likely to read and be read to, and they are more likely to go to places of educational interest. Disadvantaged children watch more television and are less likely to use standard English, a particular problem for children in non-English-speaking households."

Responses to a Chicago Sun-Times survey of public school kindergarten teachers in Chicago and Wilmette underscore the experience gap: Only 43 percent of Chicago youngsters, compared to 96 percent of Wilmette youngsters, likely had been to a zoo, library, museum or other cultural or educational institute, teachers said.

Becoming a Nation of Readers, the 1985 landmark report on teaching reading, tells what a lack of experience can lead to:

"Children who have gone on trips, walked in parks and gone to zoos and museums will have more background knowledge relevant to reading in school than will children who have not had these experiences."

Reading, the report says, is the process of applying what's on the page to what's already in the head.

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THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 3

The play's the thing in kindergarten

Chicago math education researcher. "The only time you see numbers out of context is in tables—or school practice drills."

Nancy Hanvey's class has math drills, too. But they're connected to real things and they're usually done orally, so children become comfortable with numbers.

For example, every morning a girl counts all the girls and a boy counts the boys—out loud. Then the counters write the numbers on the chalkboard and add them together.

As for reading, the skills approach is like "trying to teach someone how to play baseball by showing him how to throw a ball but not taking him to see a game," said Gillian McNamee, a researcher and teacher of early childhood education at Chicago's Erikson Institute.

"If a kid came from a rich literacy environment, he could cope," she said.

But most children served by Chicago's public schools come from homes where reading and writing are not major preoccupations and, as a result, the children don't know what reading and writing are all about.

"Children often don't know that words are separate units in the language because talk comes out as a stream," said Darrell Morris, a reading specialist at the National College of Education, based in Evanston.

A Board of Education handbook recommends that teachers of all-day kindergarten read to their children three times a day.

Following reading experts' advice, the handbook also encourages pretend writing as an introduction to reading. Children "write" their own stories by drawing and scribbling. They then dictate their stories to adults, who write them down.

Surrounded by books and posters and their dicated stories, children naturally try their hand at printing stories, inventing spelling as they go.

The Erikson Institute also recommends young authors select classmates to act out their stories. "That way they get the idea that words last when they're in print," explained Patricia Horsch, of Erikson. "And they can share their ideas through the dramatization."

Becoming a Nation of Readers, the landmark 1985 federal report on teaching reading, also advocates early, intensive phonics—the relationship between letters and speech sounds.

Using a program called Char L, Joy Williamson, a first-grade teacher at Byford Elementary School, 5600 W. Iowa, sends 10 children to the chalkboard and distributes slates to the rest of the class for lessons that involve writing and pronouncing words and using them in sentences.

In preschool and kindergarten, however, play designed with learning in mind should be the order of the day, early childhood experts say. But it's not in most Illinois kindergartens, according to the most recent study. In 1985 the Illinois Board of Education reported that 90 percent of kindergartens had an academic orientation.

Teachers Diane Gerch and Rose Bankhead are making the conversion to structured play for their 4-year-olds at the Woodson Child Parent Center, 4511 S. Evans.

Previously, Gerch and Bankhead directed many class activities and drilled children in the letter, number and thinking skills they were expected to learn. "We used to spend a lot of time drilling," said Bankhead. "And they got it. But they got it so much easier this way."

However, the teachers have had to reassure parents that their children are learning even though they are no longer bringing worksheets home.

Under the new approach, adopted with the help of the Erikson Institute, children have shown more creativity, seem more independent, and interact more with each other, creating little teachers out of some of the brighter children, the teachers said.

"Either program can carry them through first and second grade," Bankhead said. "With this we hope to carry them through 10th, 11th and 12th grade."

Dorothy Kellberg, an administrator in the Board of Education's bureau of early childhood education, said: "We're changing, but, boy, it is a slow process. One of the bigger problems is not the teachers but the principals. Principals wanted more academic kindergartens."

Jacquelynne Gilmore, Woodson's principal, is among the few Chicago principals with a degree in early childhood education. She said she persuaded her kindergarten teachers to drop their academic orientation by telling them not to worry about the quarterly tests the School Board requires.

Gilmore postponed the November test until February. The children passed.

"Now my teachers know their children can learn through play, and I'm just delighted," she said.

Even if the pressure of testing is eased, however, it's unlikely that state-of-the-art advice will soon blossom into state-of-the-art teaching.

Experience with the School Board's new handbook for written composition shows that. Even principals who appreciate its emphasis on thinking and planning as opposed to grammar and punctuation feel at a loss to do much with it.

"It's a wonderful example of how not to implement a program," said Leroy Boyce, principal of Byford Elementary School and a "graduate" of the Illinois Writers Project, which teaches teachers to teach writing.

"Everything in this handbook is correct," he said. "But the process is left out. I worked five hours a day to learn how to do this. We're handed a book and told, 'Here is your new writing program. Good luck.' "

Most teaching is by the book, studies show. So teaching could get a tremendous boost if school reform extended to publishers. But change has been slow in coming.

"Publishers have such a stranglehold," said Morris of the National College of Education. "And they're a very conservative force."

However, a recent book said that educators deserved much of the blame for the "dumbing down" of textbooks.

In *A Conspiracy of Good Intentions: America's Textbook Fiasco*, Harriet Tyson-Bernstein says that state and local regulations, drafted with test scores in mind, are to blame for textbooks "that squander the intellectual capital of our youth."

"Instead of designing a book from the standpoint of its subject or its capacity to capture children's imagination," she said, "editors increasingly organize materials around the content and timing of standardized tests. As a result, publishers are encouraged to manufacture texts that are simple, boring and maybe even harder for students to understand."

Researchers at the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois uncovered what has become a classic example of how simpler sometimes means harder.

The example is a reading-book adaptation of *The Shoemaker and the Elves* that mentions neither "shoemaker" nor "elves" nor even "shoes."

It read like this:

"Tap, tap, tap. See me work. I make good things. See the red ones. See the blue ones. See the yellow ones."

As the researchers on teaching and learning pressure publishers and seek the ear of educators, they also look to parents.

"You want to get parents on your side," said Jean Bell of the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project. "You want them to talk about what's going on in school in math. They should listen to what their children say and have conversations about math. There are games they could play too."

Bell recalled the reading experts' axiom that when children are read to, they learn to read. "Kids that are 'mathed to' will learn math," Bell said.

The play's the thing in kindergarten

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THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 3

Schooling of toddlers isn't new

Is public schooling of toddlers a new trend? Hardly.

Consider the Puritans in early Massachusetts. They sent children to primary school as early as age 3. Children often learned to read at age 3 or 4 in order to read the Bible.

"At different times schools serve different functions in a society," said Bernard Spodek, a University of Illinois educator who has studied the history of early childhood education.

Early childhood education's purpose today is to help children become productive members of society and to provide day care, said Spodek, editor of a book titled *Today's Kindergarten*.

Kindergarten started in 19th-century Germany as a nature-oriented bridge between home and school, and in the United States became a vehicle to acculturate new immigrants, with kids attending in the morning and mothers in the afternoon.

Curriculum first focused on training kids to have proper habits, and later on helping them achieve "emotional catharsis" through creative arts, while John Dewey and Francis Parker pioneered child-centered schooling in Chicago.

As kindergartens were absorbed increasingly into public school systems, they focused first on readiness and then on academics.

While there are different approaches, early childhood education now seeks to balance learning and play, Spodek said, as more schools go to all-day kindergartens and to junior kindergarten programs for 4-year-olds.

"People are looking a lot more seriously at what kids learn and what is legitimate for young kids to learn," he said. "It's a very exciting time."

And if you don't like the latest theories, take heart: Schooling isn't mandatory in Illinois until age 7 anyway.

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 4

How parents are failing to prepare kids

Many kindergartners hurt

By Don Hayner and Neil Steinberg

A 5-year-old boy came to kindergarten at Drake Elementary School last year not knowing common words like "doll" and "cat."

He didn't know how to look at a picture book, or how to do things most children learn "from just being alive," said Judith Bowden, his teacher at Drake, 2722 S. King.

The boy's mother is illiterate and could not read to him, which Bowden said was a major cause of his school problems.

More than six of 10 children in city public school kindergartens are not read to by parents, according to teachers responding to a Chicago Sun-Times survey.

By comparison, nine of 10 kindergartners in Wilmette public schools are read to by their parents, as are 87 percent of middle- and upper-income children attending Chicago public schools. Yet experts say reading aloud to children is crucial to their educational development.

"The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years," according to the landmark 1984 report Becoming a Nation of Readers by the Commission on Reading.

One ongoing study by Linda Meyer, a senior scientist at the nationally recognized Center for the Study of Reading in Champaign, goes even further. Meyer's study suggests that parents reading to their children is not enough. There must be quality reading that involves an exchange of questions and insights between parents and children.

Teachers surveyed said six of 10 children have parents who do not know how to prepare them educationally for kindergarten. Teachers in Wilmette said only one of 10 children has such parents and slightly more than two of 10 middle- and upper-income Chicago children have parents who don't know how to prepare them.

Typical survey responses from kindergarten teachers:

"The children are left to take care of themselves." "Parents don't talk to children or ask them questions." "Nobody worked with these children. Television is their babysitter."

Many Chicago children are far behind when they start school. And while the study indicates parents want to help, it also shows they don't know how.

Educators, who for a long time looked within the school system for the key to academic improvement, are increasingly looking to parents.

"It is unlikely that we will be able to make a major difference for the child unless we place equal priority on education and academic remediation for the parent," warned a 1988 Ford Foundation study, Toward a More Perfect Union: Basic Skills, Poor Families and Our Economic Future.

Once a young child falls behind, he may never catch up, said Burton L. White, director of the Center for Parent Education in Newton, Mass., and author of The First Three Years. He added:

"The child who is delayed at age 3 when he enters Head Start invariably, with virtually no exceptions, is behind on language. And if he's nine months or more behind on language, the chances are very good he'll never be an average student. Ever. The probability that any Head Start program is going to make him even an average student is very, very low."

Teachers said some parents don't even talk to their children.

"Many young parents don't know, for example, that even though a child is not verbal, the mother or father being verbal helps language develop," said Laura Devon, spokeswoman for Ounce of Prevention, a statewide project assisting children at risk.

Besides lacking basic parenting skills or information, parents have some ideas that are just plain wrong.

"When you think you've heard the worst, something the next day always tops it," said Cheryl Stampley, a nurse working with new parents at the Robert Taylor Homes.

Often, mothers feel that showing attention to newborns will "spoil" them. Some fathers feel that, until they are 6 months old, babies cannot see. Or hear. Or feel pain.

A surprising number of parents will not put their children in a crib. They're afraid of crib death, although the crib itself, of course, has nothing to do with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

A parent does not have to be poor to be overwhelmed with the responsibility of child rearing. Middle-class parents also frequently don't know what children need.

"As bright as they are, they are totally unprepared (to be parents)," said Pat DeMar, director of a Family Focus drop-in center in Lincoln Park.

While poor parents may lack knowledge, said DeMar, affluent parents, ironically, sometimes have too much.

"They read numerous books, on child bearing, on child rearing, but they reach a point where they're so well-read they lack security in their own instincts," DeMar

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THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 4

Parents failing to prepare kids

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said.

"I worked at Cabrini-Green and Robert Taylor, and I saw better parenting because they felt their instincts were OK."

Without adequate parental involvement, children can be so far behind when they enter school they have great difficulty catching up, even if the school does its job.

At Terrell Elementary School, 5410 S. State, next to the Robert Taylor Homes, fourth-graders made a year's worth of progress in reading during 1987. Yet they still remained about 1½ years behind the national norm.

"We have to work twice as hard to get the children half as far," said Terrell Principal Reva Hairston.

Parents often instill in their children a distaste for school that never goes away.

One young mother, Kathy Jackson, sees her lack of participation as the cause of her son Robert, 11, having trouble in elementary school.

"He's not interested in school," said Jackson.

"I didn't read to him, I didn't do anything with him. I believe that had a lot to do with it."

She said she has begun to read to her younger son, Rodney, who is enrolled in the Dewey Child Parent Center, 638 W. 54th Pl., and that he seems to like school.

Many parents are illiterate. One of every three to four adults in Chicago is functionally illiterate.

From 650,000 to 1 million Chicagoans above the age of 16 read below the sixth-grade level. Only one-half of 1 percent of these adults are enrolled in literacy programs, according to the Chicago Literacy Coordinating Center.

Illiteracy itself, though, needn't prevent a parent from enriching a child's early years and helping to foster a desire for learning.

"Even if you can't read yourself, you can contribute by telling your child anything from fairy tales to stories of your childhood," said James Garbarino, president of the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development.

"You create a social event in which the child begins to get the idea of gaining meaning."

Many parents are themselves children. In 1986, 9,959 children were born to teenage parents in Chicago. If these children were entering Chicago public schools today, they would represent one-third of all kindergartners. Studies show teenage parents are more hostile and punitive to their children. They also don't talk or listen to them as much as older parents do.

"I was 15 when I had my little girl," said Estasia, a mother in the Beethoven Project, which assists parents in caring for their children. "I had to give up cheerleading. I loved that uniform. She was my responsibility, from the moment I got home from school."

"There is that tug-of-war between being a responsibile parent and doing what you want to do," said Devon of Ounce of Prevention.

"Often young parenting increases the incidence of child abuse and neglect. We've seen that in news accounts of the last couple months, where a mom left her baby in a cold garage. Many young moms might think it is OK to leave an infant in that situation for a couple hours."

More than 10 percent of the babies born in Chicago are also dangerously underweight, according to the Public Health Department. Low birth weight is caused by a range of prenatal factors, from drug abuse to poor nutrition to depression.

Low birth weight is a factor in 70 percent of Chicago's infant mortalities, and surviving low-weight infants have a greater chance of suffering physical and mental handicaps.

Most poor parents want the best for their children, according to the Sun-Times study. They just don't know how to get it.

The survey shows that 65 percent of parents come to school to discuss their children's progress more often than the two times required to pick up report cards.

"You don't discuss your child's progress unless there is interest," said Ted Sanders, Illinois education superintendent.

And nearly six of 10 try to help their child with homework, according to the study.

"I've never met a parent who didn't want her child to succeed, but some of them don't know what to do," said Reva Hairston, principal at Terrell for the last 12 years.

"So much depends on the home life and how much parents do with their children as far as listening and talking to the child," one teacher wrote, echoing a sentiment of many of those surveyed.

Although a minority, some parents seem to have almost no involvement with their children's education after they start school.

About 14 percent of children have parents who have never come to school, not even to pick up their children's report cards.

"Many children raised themselves, and come to school when they feel it's time," said Pam Stevens, director of the Dewey Child Parent Center. "I went to a house on a home visit, and the door was open, the babies walking around, and the parents nowhere to be found."

Almost one of 10 children is regularly more than 15 minutes late for school, and 15 percent of all children miss more than five days of school a month, according to the Sun-Times study.

Bowden of the Drake school said she has one child who was absent 51 days and another who was absent 40 days this school year. "I think some parents are so overwhelmed with their own problem they can't see, so their priority is self-preservation."

Teachers say many parents don't like to visit schools because it reminds them of their own academic failure.

"When they come to school, it's because their children are destructive," said Dr. Grace Dawson, principal of Beethoven School. "They come to school for negative, not for positive, reasons."

While parental involvement will improve a child's chances of school success, increasing that involvement is not easy.

"It would be nice if we said to parents that involvement is in your child's best interest, and they would do it," said Dewey director Stevens. "But we have to use all kinds of bribes and incentives. We have to persuade. We have to be evangelical. There's a big gap between where we are and where we are supposed to be."

Parents can get help preparing kids

Spurred by "The Critical Years" series reprinted in this special section, the Chicago Public Schools Alumni Association has launched a campaign to help parents prepare their children for school.

"We are interested in making certain children get a good start in school so that they will graduate and become alumni," said Harriet O'Donnell, the association's executive director.

The campaign began when World Book-Childcraft donated 45,000 copies of its "Getting Ready for School" booklet to distribute to parents of kindergarten and preschool youngsters in the Chicago public schools. The booklet lists 105 skills kindergarten teachers want children to know before they start school and offers suggestions on what parents can do to help their children learn the skills, which range from being able to march to recognizing the primary colors.

The list was derived from a survey of 3,000 U.S. and Canadian kindergarten teachers sponsored by World Book-Childcraft.

CRITICAL YEARS: FOLLOWUP

The Chicago Public Library then agreed to make the booklet available in its regional and neighborhood branches. And the Chicago Region PTA asked members to help arrange parent training sessions at their schools.

WLS-TV plans to produce public-service announcements demonstrating some of the skill-building activities. One or more of the city's Spanish-language television stations is expected to join in.

World Book vice president Alvin Granowsky said the series "was a good example of how the media can alert people in a constructive way to an issue. . . . It started people thinking."

Copies of "Getting Ready for School" may be obtained by calling 881-8708 (for people living south of North Avenue) or 934-4206 (for those north of North Avenue.)

Moms, dads get involved in education

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 4

By Don Hayner
and Neil Steinberg

When Judy Holloway visited a young mother living on the impoverished north side of St. Louis, the mother was worried. Her 7-month-old baby couldn't crawl.

Holloway, trained through a unique statewide Missouri program as a "parent educator," had a hunch. And she was right.

"The child rarely had an opportunity to be on the floor," Holloway said.

She told the mother to put the child on the floor often "and just right away the baby started crawling."

A parent is a child's first and most important teacher. Yet parents, rich, poor and middle class alike, often don't know how to help their children develop, physically or mentally.

Some low-income mothers try to protect their children while limiting their opportunity to learn and grow. Some of the children crawl or walk later than they should because the mothers don't want the children on the floor with rat and roach poison.

Holloway sits in a crowded school annex office in St. Louis. She is surrounded by six other parent educators, all of them poring over lessons they will take to parents during home visits that day. They're part of a growing nationwide movement to educate parents and get them more involved in their children's education.

Missouri is at the front of this movement. It established a statewide Parents as Teachers program through the Early Childhood Development Act of 1984. The program is designed to help parents enhance their children's development from birth to age 3.

The law requires every school district in Missouri to offer parent training. In 1987, there were 53,000 Missouri families enrolled in the PAT program. By the 1988-89 school year, the state hopes to have 60,000 families enrolled.

Parent participation in the PAT program is voluntary but strongly promoted through community and mass media information campaigns.

"We have trained professionals from 26 states and there are programs operating in 20 states," said Mildred Winter, director of the National Center of Parents as Teachers at the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

The PAT program evolved from a pilot project started in 1981, based on theories of noted child development expert Burton L. White, who believes the first three years of life are crucial to intellectual development.

In the pilot program, first-time parents of 75 Missouri children received monthly home visits and attended monthly group meetings.

The parents were instructed in a wide range of child-rearing techniques and were encouraged to interact with their children through reading aloud and other activities.

Children whose parents received training "scored significantly higher on all measures of intelligence, achievement, auditory comprehension, verbal ability and language ability," according to an evaluation of the pilot program by the Research and Training Associates of Overland Park, Kansas.

Children of parents in the program performed well "regardless of socioeconomic disadvantages and other traditional risk factors," the evaluation concluded.

Teen mothers in the Merramec Valley school district, southwest of St. Louis, have found the statewide program beneficial to themselves as well. They were encouraged to stay in school, and their dropout rate fell to zero. And in some child abuse cases in Missouri, judges ordered parents to participate in the PAT program as a condition for keeping their children.

Wilma Wells believes PAT makes a difference. She heads a group of parent educators stationed in the Banneker School, a center surrounded by housing projects on the north side of St. Louis.

On her desk is a plaque that reads: "It's better to build children than repair men."

Wells said low-income families tend to be suspicious of parent educators and sometimes fail to keep appointments. Many cancel without calling, sometimes just to take a car ride to a grocery store, which will spare them a walk or a bus ride with bulging bags.

"If you do things like call a day before . . . and if you stick and stay through missed appointments, after a year, or into the second year, they know you're not there to pry into their lives," said Wells. They know you're there to help, she said.

She says 16 percent to 17 percent of parents she helps train drop out of the PAT program, but those who continue with the program often gain a positive feeling for the school system.

When Wells knocks on the door of a two-flat, the door swings open and a smiling Khari Knighten, who's almost 3 years old, swings the door open and says, "Hi, teacher."

Khari and his mother, Debra, 28, welcome Wells as they would a neighbor invited over for coffee.

From her shoulder bag, Wells pulls a puzzle for Khari and his cousins, and then reviews the boy's progress with his mother. Wells encourages Debra to make cardboard puzzles for Khari and explains the importance of educational games.

When asked what she's gotten out of the program, Debra says shyly, "I've learned to be patient."

One Chicago program, though small, is gaining nationwide attention for its work with parents.

It's called the Center For Successful Child Development, but is nicknamed the Beethoven Project because it focuses on parents of children scheduled to enter kindergarten at Beethoven Elementary School in 1993. The school serves six buildings at the Robert Taylor Homes housing project.

The project,, which was launched last November, will provide the children and their parents with special services over the next five years. Mothers will receive counseling and classes in parenting. Children will attend preschool.

About 190 parents take part in the pilot program, which focuses on the time the child is born until he enters kindergarten.

"Parents in the program listen more," said Haroldine Bourelly, community linkages director of the program. "They don't yell at their child as much. They don't hit their child as much."

The program, is funded in part by philanthropist Irving Harris.

In stark contrast to the surrounding decay, the Beethoven project is a spanking new, modern facility, with a medical clinic and colorful, toy-strewn play areas where children are supervised while parents meet to take classes or exchange information.

One of the nation's first family programs, Family Focus, was founded 12 years in Chicago by Bernice Weissbourd. It runs seven drop-in centers around the city, from Lincoln Park to the South Side. "We have classes, workshops, meetings," said Blanca Almonte, director of Family Focus West Town. "We try to provide parents with accurate information. Many parents really believe that if you pick up a child too much, you will spoil him."

"It helped me a lot not to yell at them or hit them, do something wrong," said Celestine Miranda, a West Side mother in the Family Focus program. "I used to get home and feel a lot of pressure I didn't want. They used to watch a lot of TV. Now they don't have the time (because of their activities from Family Focus). I thought it (parenthood) was easy. I thought it was all fun."

"I don't think we're scratching the surface in Chicago," said Weissbourd, Family Focus president. "The

Moms, dads get involved in education

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need is enormous, every community should have a family resource program, and they exist in few communites."

Other communities across the country are experimenting with parent education.

In Benton Harbor, Mich., parents help manage the elementary schools and develop curricula. Some parents are paid to help in the classroom and others are encouraged to volunteer.

About 75 percent of the 7,000 students in the program are from low-income families. Despite the poverty, a school development program modeled on the theories of James Comer, a Yale professor of child psychiatry, is showing promise.

Comer started his program in two schools with the worst academic records in New Haven, Conn. Now, children in those schools are among the state's top academic performers.

Since 1982, the Comer method has been introduced slowly on the grade-school level, and fourth grade math and reading scores have more than doubled.

Comer's method calls for management teams representing parents, teachers, mental health services and administrators. The teams set goals and arrange activities for the year.

Some parents, such as Donna Green, are paid $3.35 an hour, for about 15 hours a week to help out at school. Green has a son at Hull Elementary School and started volunteering in the fall of 1984.

Since Green became involved in the school, she's finished high school, has enrolled in college and is well on her way to becoming a teacher. She's on the dean's list at Western Michigan.

Being present at a school does more than help an individual parent.

"They become your goodwill ambassadors to the community," said Russell Tynes, the Hull principal.

Pointers to smooth early years

A summary of rules of good parenting from early-childhood experts:

- **Love your child even before birth.** Say no to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and junk food during pregnancy; maintain a loving, relaxed attitude toward the unborn child; consider spacing children 2½ years apart.
- **Provide a responsive environment for your child.** Provide an interesting environment for the child to view, listen and explore; respond to calls for attention but tell toddlers to wait a minute if you're busy.
- **Talk to your child.** Talk to your child from birth; use specific language, not baby talk; talk about shared experiences and memories; ask curiosity-provoking questions; watch TV shows with kids and discuss them.
- **Listen to your child.** Try to see things from your child's perspective as you interact; try to explain the meaning of an activity to them and what they may learn from it; don't insist on doing it your way.
- **Believe in your children and let them believe in themselves.** Encourage them to be themselves, not just to do things well; be more affirming than judgmental.
- **Let your child find positive role models in the community.** Provide opportunities to establish relationships with significant adult friends; go on field trips.
- **Play with your child.** Play regularly with babies; play games as a learning activity; if the child asks about the stars, tell him or her about them and make it a playful activity but not a lecture on astronomy.
- **Read to your child.** Set aside time each day to read to children or tell stories; make the stories a jumping-off point for discussion; let preschoolers help draw pictures of stories or help write shopping lists; make scrapbooks with kids.
- **Guide more than punish.** Use gentle humor; look for causes of problems and seek to remove them if possible; set clear behavorial rules based on each child's ability to understand consequences; state your feelings clearly.
- **Impart a love of learning.** Make learning a joy; don't push; allow opportunities to play with words, use games for learning; exemplify a love of culture and hard work; instruct and encourage them in organizing activities.

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 5

'Invisible' gifted lost forever

By Alf Siewers

"I was never able to get along at school. I was always at the foot of the class. I used to feel the teachers did not sympathize with me and that my father thought I was stupid." —*Thomas Edison*

"[My father's] teachers reported ... that he was mentally slow, unsociable and adrift forever in his foolish dreams."
—*Albert Einstein Jr.*

Leonard Myles spent his critical years learning to dive for cover when a gun went off or a car backfired.

Gang members tried to recruit him as a drug runner; he learned to ride the CTA by himself when he was 4½.

And when he started boarding a big yellow bus to go off to school in first grade, other kids living in the Cabrini-Green housing project laughed because they thought he was going to a school for the handicapped.

He wasn't. Leonard is one of America's "invisible" gifted children—bright, economically disadvantaged kids from the inner city who experts say are too often overlooked.

In kindergarten he was recognized as bright by school staff and enrolled in a magnet school for gifted children, the cream of the city's primary pupils.

And when Leonard's performance in school slid into the middle-grade slump that hits many inner-city students, his mother packed up the family and moved them out of Cabrini-Green and into a Humboldt Park apartment.

Nine-year-old Leonard is doing better at school since the move.

"I dream about going to Harvard and being an architect," he said.

"Don't never say never," added his mother Shirley Jones, a 25-year-old public-school dropout who, with four children, no husband and 18 years of life spent in Cabrini-Green, still dreams of being a lawyer herself someday.

Seated in a folding chair in their near-empty apartment, Board of Education social worker Jose Nebrida dreams of sending Leonard even farther away from the projects, to a private boarding school.

"There are a lot of Leonards in Cabrini-Green, a lot in the Robert Taylor Homes, in the projects or houses like this," Nebrida said.

"I bet you that one of those kids across the street there, given the chance, given the opportunity, would really blossom educationally," Nebrida said, pointing to Hispanic children playing on the sidewalk along Augusta Boulevard. "The problem is that we don't have that many programs."

Educators concerned with encouraging the development of bright inner-city children like Leonard are focusing on the critical first years of life.

Without encouragement then, Nebrida and others say, such "rare" children are more likely to end up gang leaders than architects.

Exact definitions of giftedness vary widely, as do estimates of what percentage of kids are gifted and how to identify them.

It involves an "abnormal" ability to think and experience life at high levels of critical and creative thought, and it appears in kids without regard to income, address of even success in school.

But while the Chicago Public Schools have nationally recognized programs for gifted children, the focus of programs generally for disadvantaged children remains on helping those who are behind to catch up, not to get ahead.

This year Chicago schools spent about $205 million on special education, but only about $3 million for gifted education.

Though some additional programs also target above-average pupils, Chicago has no gifted bilingual or preschool services, and existing gifted programs can't fully cover the city or target potentially gifted disadvantaged children.

"We're deeply concerned with minority youngsters being brought forward to grade level, but not with carrying them beyond, and I think that's deeply regrettable," said Dorothy Sisk, a former director of the U.S. Office of Gifted and Talented who in the 1970s argued unsuccessfully for a federal strategy to spur above-average development of inner-city kids.

Some educators studying the critical years and disadvantaged kids who bounce back later in life say that "above-average" could turn out to be "normal" if children were given the right opportunities and expectations.

Neuroscience research indicates "we're probably creating giftedness by what we do or don't do," said gifted-expert Barbara Clark of California State University.

"It's not surprising that kids from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds should come to a bad end; what's more surprising is that most of those kids do well to OK, and we can't explain that," said University of Chicago psychologist Bertram Cohler, co-editor of the recent book The Invulnerable Child.

A survey cited in the book of 400 famous men and women of the 20th century showed three-quarters of them as children were under heavy stress from poverty, broken homes, domineering or absent parents, various handicaps and illnesses.

A study of hundreds of children who grew up during the Great Depression of the 1930s found many in later years turned childhood adversity into success.

An active and optimistic disposition, supportive adult role models, and a cohesive and warm family or extended family are keys to such resilience in children, as are other factors such as church attendance.

A University of Illinois study of parents with gifted children compared to parents of non-gifted children found that the first group encouraged children to participate in decision-making, engaged in activities related to those that the children would experience in school, and spent more time reading to children, asking and answering questions, and sharing their own activities with them.

"One thing that is very beneficial to a child is reading to a child, helping him to expand his interests, showing an interest in what he is doing, encouraging his language development, so he can express himself and reinforce his feelings of worth," said University of Illinois gifted-expert Merle Karnes. "Many gifted children have really poor self-concepts, sometimes because they expect too much of themselves or sometimes because parents don't reinforce them as they should."

Interviews with families of disadvantaged gifted children in Chicago indicate they provided a warm stimulating environment for their children, and some aggressively sought special programs for them.

But in terms of the larger society, "we have the expectation that they can't possibly make it, and therefore we're not on the lookout for those kids who could really benefit from education," Cohler said.

THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 5

‘Invisible’ gifted lost forever

Gifted students are easily bored in school and unusually sensitive. Studies show a surprising number of gifted young people end up in prison, and suggest a decline in intelligence scores and creativity among disadvantaged children generally as they go through school. Some survive as "invulnerable children" who may never realize their full potential to be gifted adults.

"Very little of the talk of school reform has dealt with gifted, it's usually a fairly low concern or priority in most school systems," said Board of Education gifted-program director Richard Ronvik, whose programs serve 7 percent of public-school pupils.

Ronvik said schools here do "pretty well" at finding bright children, thanks to staff like Nebrida, magnet programs, and local-school programs with flexible entry requirements. Experts outside the system concur.

But more resources would be needed to expand services and to encourage potential giftedness in disadvantaged children, as school districts elsewhere in the country are trying to do, he said.

"We're overrun with studies on the need for remedial skills, but we're not putting nearly enough emphasis on developing the gifted potential that's there in the inner city," said Mary Frasier, director of the Torrance Center on Creativity in Atlanta.

One child missed through lack of manpower was Cornelius Smith.

A second-generation resident of the Henry Horner Homes, he lives in the same apartment where his grandmother moved 33 years ago; his mother is a bright young woman who became addicted to drugs and no longer lives at home.

The 14-year-old often can be found playing basketball alone at a park away from the public-housing projects, or watching basketball on TV in his apartment. He keeps his distance from peers who have joined gangs.

"If I want to get away from here," he said, "I stay away from them."

In seventh grade he was still attending a school near the projects.

Teachers had tried unsuccessfully to transfer him out of the school, where his work was "real easy."

A year ago, thanks to a persistent counselor and Nebrida, he was enrolled in the Bell Regional Gifted Center, 3730 N. Oakley, which Leonard Myles also attends.

Since then Cornelius placed No. 2 citywide among top seventh graders who took the high-school Standardized Achievement Test, earning a score that was among the top 10 percent of high school juniors and seniors nationwide.

His grandmother's mailbox now is stuffed with letters from prestigious schools, including a high school scholarship offer from Phillips Academy in Massachussetts, though his family won't let him go so far from home.

When middle-class kids at the Bell center ask Nebrida how Cornelius can do so well at the school, Nebrida tells them, "It depends on the human being, it doesn't make any difference what the circum stances are, if he doesn't want those kinds of circumstances . . . nobody's going to stop him. No-

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'Invisible' gifted lost forever

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body can."

However, Nebrida added: "The system itself discourages us, because they say they don't want an elite group. . . . There are so many Corneliuses around there, but without any chance, they just wither on the vine! So I kind of wish, if I look back now, I found him in first or second grade."

Gifted programs are crucial in the early years. But only about 4,000 of more than 22,000 children in all Chicago gifted programs are in kindergarten through third grade.

About half the city's elementary schools have no gifted programs, and those that do receive no extra staff.

And low-income children are a definite minority at top gifted-magnet centers such as Leonard's, which serve intellectually gifted children and have rigorous entry requirements that are governed by court-mandated desegregation quotas.

While 78 percent of public elementary students are from poor families, only 24 percent of the approximately 1,500 pupils in gifted centers are low-income as measured by the percentage of children receiving subsidized lunches.

Support staff say there's a need for more room at regional gifted centers; for tutors in primary grades at centers to help disadvantaged kids; for more gifted programs in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods; for more gifted-parental-involvement programs; more in-service training in gifted education for regular teachers; staff for neighborhood programs; gifted bilingual programs, and gifted preschool and community-outreach programs.

"We need to go out into the community . . . talk to the families, church groups and social agencies . . . into Little Village . . . if I were to go out there and say we are looking for those children you feel are the leaders, they could probably identify them," said Board of Education psychologist Rosina Gallagher.

Otherwise, she said, "The youngsters who come to us tend to come from parents who are already aware of what's available in the school system."

Erick Sosa, a seventh-grade son of Mexican immigrants, had to fight to stay in a gifted program. He attended the Bell center but during a middle-grade slump was transferred out into a regular classroom.

He might have stayed there if not for overcrowding that bumped him into a local gifted class. In sixth grade he was told that because he was in the gifted class only due to overcrowding, he couldn't take the entrance exam of a junior-high International Baccalaureate program for above-average students.

"Why can't I take the test?" he kept asking. The teacher relented.

"I took the test the same afternoon, and I got my grades and had a 95 and passed," Erick said proudly.

LaTasha Jackson, a bright-eyed and giggly second-grader, goes to one of the Chicago schools that don't have a gifted program, the Farren School at 5055 S. State St., across from the Robert Taylor Homes. Her mother, a single parent on welfare, is studying to earn a high-school equivalency diploma.

Teachers consider LaTasha gifted. She scores a year above grade level, finishes her work early, likes to grade classmates' papers at her teacher's desk, and often takes charge of the class when the teacher is gone.

"She doesn't like to think of herself as bright," said teacher Beverly Littleton-Harris. "She'll bring up a picture she's drawn and say, 'Isn't this ugly?' And I'll say, 'No it's beautiful.' "

Preschool expert Burton L. White has estimated that only one in 10 families provides a proper environment for children in the critical period between the ages of 8 months and 3 years. That corresponds with the percentage of gifted children found later in school, Clark said.

This ideal environment is responsive and communicative, not pressured; it lets the child guide playful learning that's based on high expectations.

"Our genetic program is not a limit for us, it's a pattern, and it's only a limit when we want to impose other patterns on it," such as limiting kids' learning according to age, or emphasizing the rational at the expense of the emotional, physical and intuitive, Clark said.

Still, Cohler emphasizes that resilient children aren't "doomed" by bad circumstances early on.

And Wilbur Brookover of Michigan State University doesn't even like using the label "gifted;" he says it lowers expectations for children who lack it.

Brookover investigated a low-income black elementary school in Mobile, Ala., that had exceptional above-average performance on tests by pupils.

While the school had received funding for compensatory education, it had used the money to bolster regular classes instead.

Brookover found the staff upholding "a clear belief that the children could learn and assuming responsibility for teaching them; they expected them to do well and did very little if any differentiating among students."

There were no compensatory programs at the school, no officially identified low achievers, and little low achievement.

Likewise, child-parent centers in Chicago in the early 1970s produced inner-city primary-grade pupils who scored above national norms thanks to parental involvement, high expectations and extra resources.

But without early support, bright disadvantaged children not identified in preschool "many times will camouflage their gifted characteristics and may never be identified," said Irving Sato, director of the California-based National State Leadership Training Institute.

Three years ago, Deirdre Thompson, now 7, was identified as potentially gifted in a federally sponsored pilot project in Champaign-Urbana that targeted an often neglected group: smart preschool children from the inner city.

The project, which Karnes developed, took all the Head Start children and worked with them using gifted-education techniques.

Lessons were aimed at playfully stimulating a child's thinking and problem-solving skills, through activities such as playing detective and making inventions. The program also included special work with parents.

Being gifted can include "academic talent, creativity, visual and performing arts, leadership, social-emotional (qualities)," and perhaps for the very young psychomotor skills, Karnes said. "The key to a program for the gifted is a teacher who is flexible, who is very open and picks up cues from the children."

Certain children like Deirdre—who lives in a one-parent family on welfare in a mainly black public housing project—were identified as potentially gifted.

Both gifted and non-gifted children showed significant growth as compared to another group of Head Start children who didn't participate and whose creativity scores actually declined during preschool.

The attitude of teachers toward children in the special program also was found to be significantly more positive as compared to the regular program.

But this year when Karnes tried to introduce the same Head Start curriculum to programs in Chicago, a Department of Human Services' advisory panel turned thumbs down.

The reasons cited for the rejection represent common obstacles to those who would encourage bright young inner-city kids: Disagreement about what's the best way to do so without over-pressuring them, and concern about the response of parents and children who aren't labeled gifted.

By contrast, kindergarteners at the Burbank Regional Gifted Center, 2035 N. Mobile, recently were learning Latin and discussing why astronauts wear spacesuits, in a kindergarten room that boasts three computers.

An observer might assume they all had gone to preschool, said teacher Laura Leddy. "But a number of these children grew up in homes where they have their moms stay home, and some of the mothers have been teachers themselves — the parents have given them a lot at home."

Meanwhile, Deirdre switched school systems after Head Start, didn't receive special screening, and this year was in a regular first-grade class.

Her first-grade teacher didn't know Deirdre was identified as potentially gifted in preschool and considered her "very immature" though bright.

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THE CRITICAL YEARS: Part 5

'Invisible' gifted lost forever

The girl still exhibits traits of a disadvantaged, potentially gifted child who may go unrecognized: She excels among other classmates from the projects, exhibits unusual sensitivity (or "immaturity"), is creatively gifted, outstanding in art, and according to her mother does "weird things" at home like carry around a Word Search puzzle book as a favorite toy.

A number of cities are starting alternative and bilingual gifted programs to find and support such bright disadvantaged children in the primary grades, kindergarten and preschool.

A few states fund gifted preschool programs.

San Diego last year introduced gifted curriculum to all kindergarten and first- and second-graders in 10 inner-city schools, offering special help to those identified as bright.

In Montgomery County, Md., a primary-grade program in recent years has resulted in several hundred children once identified as non-gifted being re-evaluated by test scores as gifted children, after special help.

Donnelly Gregory, director of the program, recalls how some classroom teachers recoiled in disbelief when certain disadvantaged or minority children were selected. They were known to be "problems," not top pupils.

Later, classroom teachers complained that "the [special] teacher gets all the good kids," Gregory said.

"To create a whole breed of gifted kids by special intervention is not too bad an idea," Ronvik said.

But to try here, he added, "I would sure want more power, more horses, more people, more money, because the potential is pretty enormous; everybody could be part of the potential that's a little above average.

"We could work with all of those kids—and in a way that's what a school is supposed to be."

Said Cohler, "Part of it is tailoring curriculum to recognize kids' competences, and part of it is being on the lookout for bright kids who have the ability to do well in school, because those are the children who otherwise are most likely to become delinquent."

If bright inner-city children were given greater prominence, Nebrida said children like Cornelius Smith would become role models.

Ideally, rather than formal gifted programs, Clark said, "I'd rather approach it the other way, allowing an enriched environment to be provided all the way through for all children—however we're not doing that, and we can't allow these [bright] children to get caught."

In a "responsive environment" for all children, gifted children would be noticed and encouraged, Clark said. "If we were just moving in that way, not deciding what someone should know and doing only that, I don't think we know what the results would be."

Pupils learn to love reading

By Linda Lenz

In a growing number of Chicago area classrooms, children are learning to read and write in much the same way they learned to talk—by trial and error, coached by an adult, motivated by their own interests.

They tackle reading and writing directly, rather than first learning the parts—letter sounds, prefixes, punctuation and so on. They read and write stories; they don't fill out worksheets.

The goal is to combat *aliteracy*, which experts say is as big a problem in the United States as is *illiteracy*.

"We primarily produce kids who can read but don't," said Diane Stephens, a researcher at the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. "And we don't produce people who can write."

Called "whole language," the new approach permits children to choose what they read and write on the theory that their interest will sustain them as they figure out how—with timely assists from teachers.

In Oak Park kindergartens, children think up stories and then write them down as best they can, penciling in a "magic squiggle" when they can't figure out which letters to use.

In a Lincolnwood second grade, spelling lessons consist of words children want to use in books they are writing. One youngster's list included "Philippines" (where he was born), "chocolate" (because he likes it) and "Greece" (because a friend had been there).

In a remedial reading class at Mundelein High School, students write their own stories, too, reading works-in-progress to one another. They worry about spelling and punctuation only when they publish, by typing stories into a computer.

"It's very much like what parents do with kids at home," said Kathleen Visovatti, a second-grade teacher at Lincolnwood's Rutledge School. "We expect kids to talk. Kids experiment with spoken language and are encouraged all the time."

In academic and publishing circles, whole language is an explosive topic, with critics contending that children need systematic instruction in the relationship between letters and sounds and, generally, more direct teaching.

But even most formal phonics folks agree that the reading pendulum has swung too far toward skills instruction.

"Doing worksheets and not reading books: That never should have happened," said Steven Stahl, a reading expert at Western Illinois University who favors formal phonics beginning in first grade.

In whole-language classrooms, children rarely, if ever, fill out worksheets on letter sounds, parts of speech, compound words or other pieces of language. Teachers talk about the pieces only when children get stuck in their reading and writing.

"We don't practice language," said Mary Schneider, language arts director for Oak Park Elementary District 97. "We use it for real purposes."

For example, one of Carol Porter's "lessons" at Mundelein High began with a discussion about how a book about a school bully might unfold. Next, her students had to write predictions for such a book, read the book and write their reactions to it.

"I wanted them to begin to see that reading is an activity where you have to be thinking and relating to your own life experiences," Porter explained. "Writing is the same process. You draw on life experiences, try to create meaning and revise your thinking as you go along."

At first, she said, "I had some students begging for worksheets because they were so comfortable with them." By midyear, however, students who had never read a novel were finishing books before the due date and making appointments with Porter to discuss their writing.

Students who typically would fail a final exam—sometimes by failing to show up—got passing grades, some with A's and B's.

"None of the kids could not read," Porter said. "They just hadn't been given the opportunity."

They were too busy doing worksheets and plowing through assigned stories that held no interest for them, she said. As a result, their comprehension ability and vocabularies stagnated.

Whole-language techniques are

Turn to Page 18

SUN-TIMES / Jim Klepitsch

Second-graders at Rutledge Hall in Lincolnwood learn spelling by using words in their own stories. "It's very much like what parents do with kids at home," said teacher Kathleen Visovatti.

Class puts reading and writing skills to work

Some highlights of a "whole language" morning in Kathleen Visovatti's second-grade class:

- All eyes are on the chalkboard, where Visovatti has written two unpunctuated, run-on sentences: *were going to have a special visitor today shes interested in all the reading and writing we do*

  Visovatti calls on youngsters to fix up the writing. Later she tells the visitor: "It's the only formal lesson I teach to the whole class."
- Brainstorming for writing topics, children call out ideas and Visovatti writes them on a large sheet of paper: My tap dance class, some Hebrew words, the mad pumpkin. . . .
- As children break into writing groups, Visovatti glances at the cubby holes that constitute the room's post office. "Lara, you have some mail." Then to the whole class: "I hope when you read your story you think, 'Oh, I know how to make that better.' It's just a draft. You can squeeze in more words." She then suggests several activities children could do "if you're stuck or finished."
- Bobby Stathis and teacher aide Diane Layto do the final editing on Bobby's handwritten book, *There's a Nightmare on Pratt Street*. Bobby has forgotten the apostrophe and hasn't put enough space between "There's" and "a," prompting Layto to ask, "Who's Theresa?" Later Layto said, "He learned the importance of punctuation."
- Meanwhile, Visovatti has been discussing works-in-progress with members of one group, who wrap up by quizzing each other on their personalized spelling lists, words they need for the stories they're writing.
- Finally, Bobby scoots into a rocker to read his book to his classmates. It's quite a yarn: "They called out the Navy, the Marines and the Army. . . . I fell in a tunnel and bats were coming and eggs were falling on my head. . . . The apples slammed into my face, and they were gone. Then I learned that if there's a nightmare, you turn your back on them and they disappear."

—Linda Lenz

Readers now get the point

Remember using your finger to follow the print when you learned to read? And your teacher admonishing: Don't point?

You were right and the teacher was wrong, some experts say. Beginning readers should point to words as they read them because the practice reinforces their understanding of what words are, they say.

"Many kids don't know what a word is," said Kay Reed, a kindergarten teacher at Oak Park's Longfellow School. "They think Halloween is three words."

One way to test a child is to have him "finger point" while reading aloud a familiar story. If the child's words get ahead of his finger, or lag behind, the child may not have mastered the idea of what a word is.

Kids attest to reading improvement

After a semester of whole-language instruction, Mundelein High School teacher Carol Porter asked her students what they thought about it. Here are excerpts from some responses, written as letters to a reporter.

Lee Miller: *I think that by thinking up your own questions and hearing other people's answers, you learn more about the story. With prepared questions, you only learn the same thing about the story that the teacher has learned.*

Jim Corrigan: *This year I have become a better reader because now I go back and reread something that I don't understand. Before I would just skip it and go on.*

Adam Rehm: *Before this year I had only finished one novel, but now I have read three novels in just five months. I now read faster and am able to understand what I'm reading better.*

Kenneth Torbeck: *I expected that I would have to read the same old low-level books and do the same stupid worksheets, but I was wrong. We read books that are close to the level that we should be reading and there are no worksheets.*

I do believe this system is the best reading system I have ever been part of, but there is one other thing. The system would not work without Mrs. Porter.

You need a teacher who is going to get down on the students' level, talk to the students as if they are your equal and not try to intimidate them. You need a teacher that understands how it feels to have a low reading level and most of all a teacher who cares for their students, not one that is just waiting for the next check.

SUN-TIMES/Rich Hein

Kay Reed, a kindergarten teacher at the Longfellow School in Oak Park, reads from the "big book." These books use natural language to tell a story.

'Big books' make story time a give-and-take experience

Introduced in Australia, "big books," or large-scale reproductions of children's stories, are becoming a staple in American classes for little kids.

The size of the books, about 1½ feet by 2 feet, enables a whole class to see how reading works. Typically, a teacher reads the story to the class, and then the class chimes in. Reading is a shared experience.

"It's like memorizing your favorite book on your mother's lap," said Darrell Morris, an early-reading expert at National College of Education. "And kids who are slow don't feel singled out."

"Big books take advantage of children's oral vocabularies to create interesting reading," added Barbara Bowman of the Erikson Institute of Chicago, which offers graduate courses in early-childhood education.

Most stories in beginning American readers are written as if little kids can handle only little words and little phrases.

"Children's oral language is far richer than that used in basal readers [basic reading textbooks]," Bowman said.

Real literature is now appearing in some basal readers. Until recently, Chicago-based Open Court publishing company was virtually alone in using unabridged, unadapted works.

Kids learn to love reading

Continued from Page 4

supported by research in psychology, sociology and linguistics. And illiteracy is at its lowest in countries where the approach is the norm—namely, in New Zealand and Australia.

But research on whole-language classrooms in the United States is inconclusive, with the picture muddied by disagreements over the quality of the tests used and the classrooms studied.

In the view of one reading expert, it doesn't matter much what the experts think. "Teachers are starting a grass-roots movement," said Darrell Morris of the National College of Education. "It will get bigger."

Two years ago, a Chicago area support group, Teachers Applying Whole Language, had only a handful of members; last fall it drew 400 educators to a conference at Deerfield High School.

Grounded on the premise that teachers know best what their pupils need, whole language is in step with the new push for teacher professionalism. In New Zealand and Australia, teachers do not move their classes lockstep through reading programs devised by publishers, noted the reading center's Stephens.

Whole language also echoes the call of experts in math, science and other disciplines to bring the real world into the classroom.

Stephens said, "When learning in school parallels learning outside school, children abandon their passivity and get involved."

Kids learn ropes of reading

High praise for program

By Linda Lenz
Chicago Sun-Times

COLUMBUS, Ohio—A year ago, Laquetas Pass, now a second-grader at Ohio Avenue School, could not read and seemingly did not want to learn how.

"She would close her book and push herself away from the table," recalled Melanie Murnan, her first-grade teacher. "Sometimes she would get angry."

Today, Laquetas loves to read.

"A reward for her is to give her reading time," said Murnan.

Murnan worked hard to usher Laquetas into the world of letters, but even she calls the girl's arrival a "miracle."

Laquetas is one of many living testimonials Ohio offers to a reading program that its state education department and Ohio State University imported from New Zealand, the world's most literate country. The program, called Reading Recovery, is now debuting in Illinois.

During the past three school years, Reading Recovery has taken in 4,000 Ohio first-graders, rich and poor, who shared a common burden: They were in the bottom 20 percent of their classes. In 12 to 15 weeks, it boosted 83 percent of these youngsters into the middle of their classes. Thereafter, the children progressed at average or above-average rates without special help.

(Another 1,700 had such poor attendance or moved so often they never got full service.)

The transformation occurred during daily, half-hour, one-on-one lessons with teachers trained to guide children toward discovering for themselves the tricks of the reading trade.

"Reading Recovery teachers don't try to teach kids everything they need to know," said Edwina Bradley, reading supervisor for Columbus public schools. "They're trying to make them independent by teaching them how to learn."

A recent demonstration session provided a glimpse of the process:

Laquetas was reading aloud *The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg.* At one point she substituted "duck" for "goose." Seeming to realize she had made a mistake, she reread the sentence (one of reading's most important tricks). But again she substituted "duck" for "goose." After Laquetas repeated the error a third time, Murnan covered up all the letters in "goose" except the "g."

"Could that be 'duck'?" Murnan asked.

Laquetas looked at the "g" and then read the word correctly.

Reading her next book, *The Gingerbread Man*, Laquetas was again tripped up by failing to pay enough attention to letters. When she came to the sentence, "He ran across the kitchen," she paused before "across," looked at the accompanying illustration and said "around."

Murnan had Laquetas run her finger under "across," hoping the girl would see it ended in "s."

"Look at the end of the word," said Murnan. "Could that be 'around'?"

Strong on checking for meaning and choosing words that fit the sentence, Laquetas had special need for the writing part of the lesson. Working with a sentence-story she made up—"I liked when the gingerbread man ran fast"—the girl was free to focus on the print.

Say Yes To
Education
Chicago Sun-Times / WLS-TV 7

Laquetas wrote most of the words herself. A year ago she could write only her name. With Murnan's help Laquetas picked out the sounds in "gingerbread," and Murnan wrote that word.

Finally, Murnan wrote the sentence on a narrow strip of paper. She snipped out each word, mixed them up and asked Laquetas to put her story back together. At first, Laquetas lined up: "I liked the gingerbread man." After noticing the leftovers, she put her story straight. The exercise forced her to do what good readers do automatically: correct their own mistakes.

Reinforcing that behavior, Murnan said: "I liked the way you fixed that up."

Gay Su Pennell, a Reading Recovery expert at Ohio State, summed up the challenge Murnan and colleagues face: "Reading is a complex, inside-the-head process. Instead of learning things in sequence, children learn everything at once."

That notion runs counter to the American tradition of teaching reading.

"So much of what I learned has to be unlearned—going from letters to words to phrases to larger passages," said Mary McElroy, a teacher from Chicago's Avalon Park Elementary School. "Here you start with the text."

McElroy is spending the year in Columbus to learn to teach teachers to conduct Reading Recovery lessons. So, too, is Martha Silva, a coordinator in District 19 on Chicago's Southeast Side. And Jana Mason and Jan Gaffney, faculty members at the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois, are commuting from Champaign.

Meanwhile in Illinois, Jan Methven, a New Zealander, is teaching eight classroom teachers from Chicago and eight from the Downstate cities of Springfield, Champaign and Urbana. All teachers already are working with children.

Because Reading Recovery teachers have a regular first-grade class half the day, the program's reach extends beyond the children enrolled.

"The training changed my philosophy," said Diane O'Shaughnessy, a Chicago native teaching in Columbus.

She laughingly recalled the days when she thought it was bad for children to write notes to each other in school.

After discovering the power of writing your own words, O'Shaughnessy set up a message center in her room. Sometimes she assigns notes, to make sure no one gets left out.

The 19-year teacher also has scrapped silent reading in favor of partner reading. "With silent reading, some kids only look at the books," she said. "They don't read."

Murnan stopped separating her children into ability groups. "The better readers reinforce the weaker readers," she explained. "And they don't know who's top, middle and low."

Kids learn ropes

It's teacher's turn for show and tell

URBANA, Ill.—On Tuesday, Barbara Gillespie, a Reading Recovery teacher-in-training, took a deep breath and put her teaching on display behind a two-way mirror.

Watching her, seven colleagues and three University of Illinois faculty members engaged in a lively oral critique, punctuated by questions and challenges from *their* Reading Recovery teacher.

Here's how part of Gillespie's half-hour event was called:

- Too many nods of approval. Amanda, the pupil, looks to Gillespie to see if she read it right. She should be asking herself.
- Terrific, animated introduction to the content of a new, harder book: Gillespie gives Amanda a good sendoff to reading it herself.
- But wait, Amanda is zipping right through that book: The book was too easy for her.
- Great recovery by Gillespie: She follows up with another new, still harder book.
- Gillespie withholds her urge to intervene: Amanda gets the time to figure something out herself.

The object of this stomach-churning exercise is to make teachers aware of what they do and how children react to what they do.

"This is a race against time, this job," said Jan Methven, the group's leader. "Everything we do has to be productive. It's not like a regular classroom. We have a special goal: Getting accelerated rates of progress with children who are behind."

Teachers who sign up for Reading Recovery must attend a year of weekly, three-hour training sessions, where teachers take turns "teaching behind the glass." From the outset, they also work with children in their home schools. In subsequent years they attend periodic updates.

This training regimen is unique. It's also what makes Reading Recovery successful, said Richard Anderson, director of the Center of the Study of Reading here and chief author of "Becoming a Nation of Readers," a 1985 landmark federal report on reading instruction.

Anderson was one of the professors participating in Tuesday's session. He wasn't dabbling, either. He's taking the course and spends an hour each day working with two youngsters at Busey School in Champaign.

"It's good for someone like me," he said.

—Linda Lenz

Reading Recovery sways skeptics

Initially, Illinois Education Supt. Ted Sanders was a Reading Recovery skeptic.

"I had read the research and told myself, 'This can't be real,' " he recalled.

So he checked out the program in person.

"I was not just impressed," he said, "I was moved by what I saw."

Meanwhile, Richard Anderson, director of the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois, was preparing an evaluation concluding that Reading Recovery eventually would prove cost effective.

Because the program has multiple funding sources—including a unique $1 million line item in the Ohio state budget—the costs are not clear, although one report estimates they run up to $2,000 per child.

Anderson noted that unlike many low-achieving children in special programs, however, the Reading Recovery kids don't need perpetual extra help.

Ronald Etheridge, superintendent of schools in Columbus, Ohio, added that Reading Recovery has helped cut the retention rate of first-graders, thereby avoiding costs of an extra year of school for hundreds of children.

"I wish my investments had this kind of yield," said Etheridge.

The Chicago-based MacArthur Foundation also was impressed by Reading Recovery and contributed money to bring it here.

Working together, Sanders and U. of I. officials then put together a start-up package that has two faculty members and two Chicago teachers studying in Ohio to become teachers of Reading Recovery teachers.

Further, they arranged for a colleague of program founder Marie Clay, of New Zealand, to spend a year in Illinois training eight Chicago and eight Downstate teachers.

As a result, youngsters in four Chicago schools—Seward, Hamline, Gregory and Sumner—already are in the program.

—Linda Lenz

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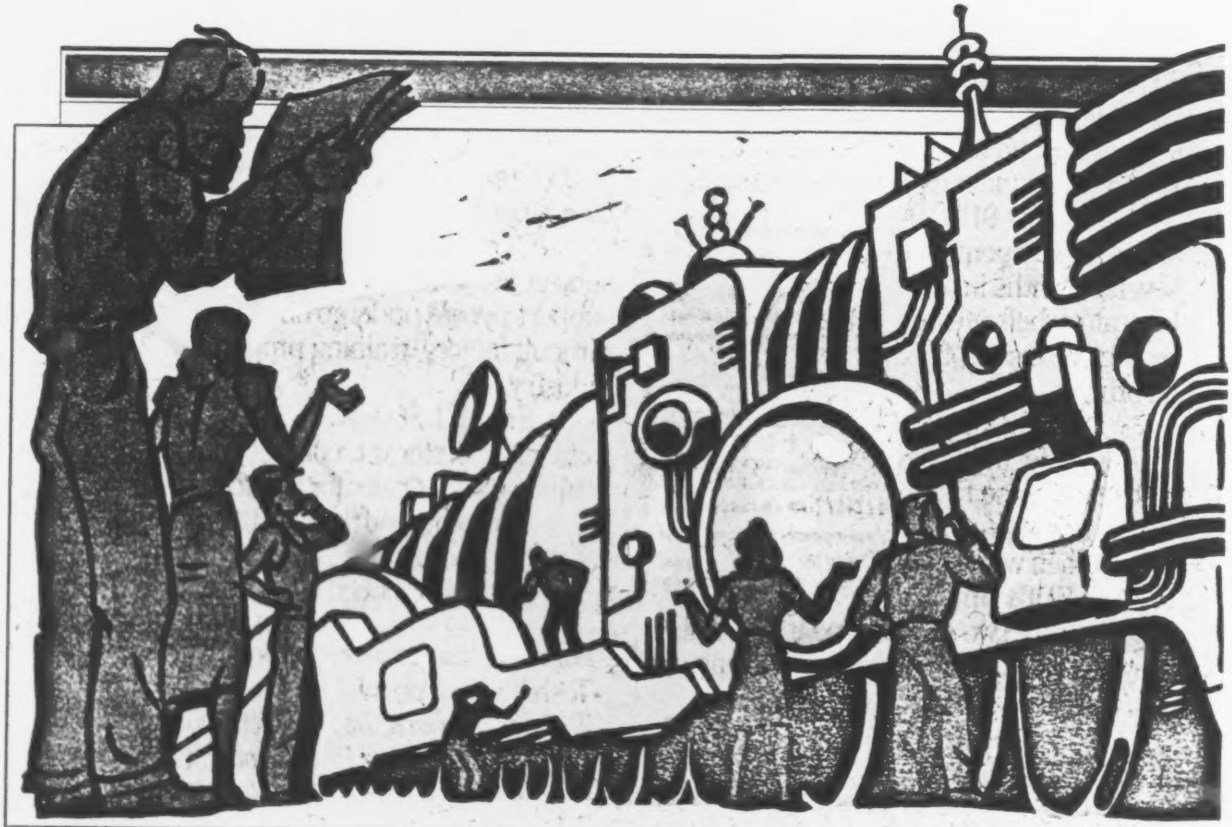
HUMAN CAPITAL

The Decline of America's Work Force

SPECIAL REPORT

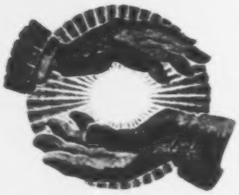
The nation's ability to compete is threatened by inadequate investment in our most important resource: people. Put simply, too many workers lack the skills to perform more demanding jobs.

And as the economy comes to depend more and more on women and minorities, we face a massive job of education and training—starting before kindergarten. Can we afford it? We have no choice. PAGE 100



NEEDED: HUMAN

Who will do America's work as the demand for skilled labor outstrips a dwindling supply? The U.S. has lost much ground to competitors, and investing in people looks like the way to retake it. After years of neglect, the problem of human capital has become a crisis

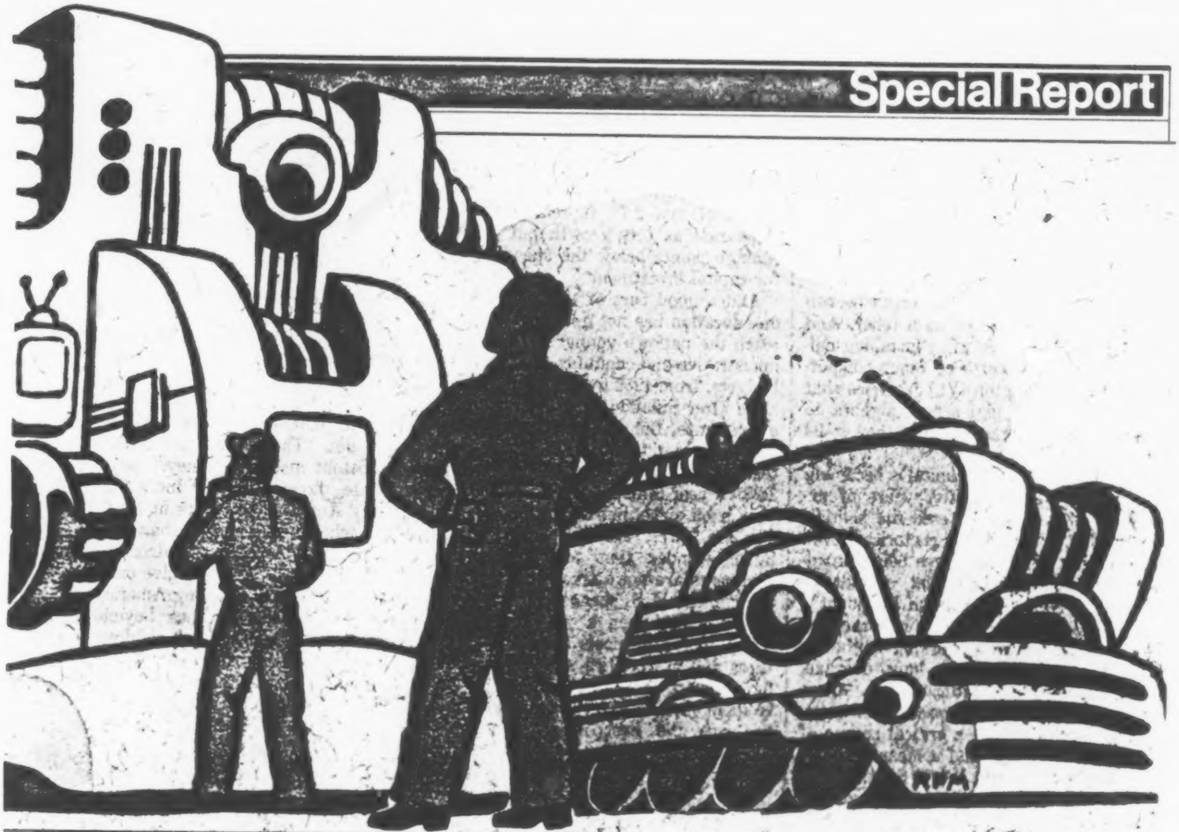


Take a trip back to what may be our future. It is the 1851 industrial exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London. Britain is the dominant world power. The U.S. is No. 2 in industry and catching up fast.

Made-in-America reapers, muskets, and tools are the marvels of the show. British businessmen are amazed at what they see. Products are assembled from completely interchangeable parts. Here is true mass production for the first time. So impressed are they that they name it "the American system of manufacture."

Worried delegations of British industrialists set sail to investigate. Their findings? American manu-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROSS MACDONALD



CAPITAL

facturing prowess is in large part due to a highly educated work force. The Yankees have an astonishingly high literacy rate of 90% among the free population. In the industrial heartland of New England, 95% of adults read and write. In contrast, just two-thirds of the people in Britain are literate.

BLINDSIDED. Now zip ahead a century or so to the 1980s. The U. S. is the dominant world power, and it is Japan that is No. 2 and closing fast. American CEOs marvel at the quality of Japanese products flooding their markets. They make pilgrimages to Tokyo. Their findings? Manufacturing superiority is being forfeited to the Japanese. And yes, once again, behind the success in manufacturing prowess lies a better-educated work force. In 1988, Japan's functional literacy rate is better than 95%. In America it's down to about 80%.

Illiteracy is but a symptom of the larger problem afflicting the U. S. economy. The $150 billion yearly trade deficit and a foreign debt of half a trillion dollars reflect the inability of a large percentage of the American work force to compete effectively in an integrated world economy. "Much of the success of Japan stems from the fact that its blue-collar workers can interpret advanced mathematics, read complex engineering blueprints, and perform sophisticated tasks on the factory floor far better than blue collars in the U. S.," says Merry I. White, professor of comparative sociology at Boston University and author of *The Japanese Educational Challenge*.

America, in short, has been scrimping on human capital. After trying to solve its serious competitiveness problems by pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into capital equipment, the country is discovering that it has been blindsided when it comes to workers. Corporate restructuring and a sharply cheapened dollar may have arrested the economic decline, but investing in people is turning out to be the only way to reverse it.

Society's failure to invest is already haunting the business community. Chemical Bank in New York must interview 40 applicants to find one who can be successfully trained as a teller. And IBM Corp. discovered after installing millions of dollars worth of fancy computers in its Burlington (Vt.) factories that it had to teach high-school algebra to thousands of workers before they could run them.

Building up human capital is becoming a national priority. After years of neglect, it has finally entered the political arena, at least on the rhetorical level. Just listen to the messages being broadcast by both Presidential candidates. Who will be the "Education President?" Who will do the most to train workers or provide child care to working mothers?

Those messages are long overdue. More than two centuries ago, Adam Smith pointed to the improvement in the skills of workers as a critical source of economic progress and a means of raising living standards. Wrote Smith in *The Wealth of Nations:* "A man educated at the expense of much labor and time to any one of those employments which require extraordinary dexterity and skill may be compared to one of those expensive machines."

'ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL.' The evidence is overwhelming that people, not machines, are the driving force behind economic growth. In the period from 1948 to 1982, the nation's gross national product increased at an annual rate of 3.2%. Edward Dennison, an expert in growth economics, finds that one-third of that gain was caused by the increase in the education level of the U.S. work force and about half the growth was the result of technological innovation and increased know-how, which also depend on education. But just 15% of the total increase was the result of more capital equipment.

While Washington has been hell-bent on throwing incentives at business to increase spending on plant and equipment, outlays for human capital in the past 15 years have lagged behind. In the period from 1959 to 1971, total spending per student in public and private elementary and high schools grew at a brisk 4.7% a year, after adjusting for inflation. That was more than a full percentage point above the robust 3.6% rate of increase in the GNP and even a smidgen higher than what business spent on plant and equipment. But from 1971 to 1985 things changed drastically. Dollars for education increased at a rate of just 2.7% in real terms, the same rate as GNP growth but 1.5 percentage points below the spending rate for capital investment.

And a good part of the money spent on education has not gone to those who teach the nation's young. Excluding administrative and capital cost from school budgets, from 1959 to 1971 teachers' salaries after inflation increased at a 2.8% annual rate. But then, even as international competition started to heat up, teachers' salaries nose-dived, falling by 1.25% a year until 1985. They've bounced back a bit since, but in real terms, salaries are barely above their 1971 level. Small wonder that top-notch college graduates are not attracted to teaching.

True, the U.S. spends plenty on education: $185 billion a year on primary and secondary schools alone. When colleges and universities are added in, the figure soars to $310 billion—more than is spent on defense. American universities are the best in the world, but elementary and high schools are another story. The U.S. gets a lot less for its education buck than do Japan and Europe. U.S. students attend class 180 days a year. French and German kids go 220 days, and Japanese children spend 240 days in school a year. American high school students score below both their foreign counterparts in international math and science tests. They test two to three years behind the Japanese, neatly matching the difference in time spent in school from kindergarten through high school. Worse, half of the kids in inner-city public high schools drop out. "The issue is not money, it's competent use of money," says Pat Choate, director of TRW Inc.'s Office of Policy Analysis. "Janitors in New York City schools make more than teachers. Education systems are patronage systems: Community boards give out jobs."

SECOND FIDDLE. Educating America's future work force reaches beyond the classroom. A fourth of all children born in the U.S. will be on welfare sometime in their lives. A quarter of all American

HUMAN CAPITAL

The Decline of America's Work Force

SPECIAL REPORT
Society's failure to invest in the work force already haunts business *Page 100*

LABOR
The gap between jobs and the skills of applicants is alarmingly wide *Page 104*

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Employers must look to women, minorities, and the elderly *Page 112*

UNDERCLASS
In the face of prosperity, a growing underclass of the unemployed *Page 122*

EDUCATION
Everyone agrees that the system needs fixing. The question is how *Page 129*

BUSINESS AND THE SCHOOLS
Companies are taking a more active role in educational reform *Page 134*

CONCLUSION
What we must do to upgrade our No. 1 asset—the American worker *Page 140*

children are born out of wedlock, and 42% of them will live in a single-parent family before they reach their eighteenth birthdays. As a result, education often plays second fiddle to the more pressing needs of survival.

The once-pervasive family role in education appears to be seriously eroding. With both parents in most families now working, the question of who's reading to the three-year-old and checking up on Junior's geometry homework is becoming a national concern. In Japan the mother plays such a strong role in teaching her children that she is known as "education mama." Here, the "education mama" is vanishing—and "education papas" aren't taking up the slack.

One big exception is in the Asian-American community. "This year, 22% of MIT's freshman class is Asian-American," says Lester C. Thurow, dean of the Sloan School of Management at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "The big reason for Asian-American success in public schools is family; family means some parent telling you that education is important."

At a time when jobs require higher levels of math, science, and literacy than ever before, the economy is becoming increasingly dependent on the groups that often receive the poorest education. Between now and the year 2000, more than half of all new workers hired will be minorities, nearly three times the current figure. Blacks and Hispanics have the highest school dropout rates in the country and lag significantly behind the national average on test scores.

But there is hope. The needs of the American workplace and the needs of the disadvantaged may be merging for the first time in recent history. The drive to raise productivity and increase international competitiveness is transforming the debate over social equity into a discussion about economic growth.

BENIGN NEGLECT. The Reagan years were an understandable reaction to the free-flowing social spending that earmarked the 1960s and 1970s. The national focus shifted to restructuring industry, deregulating the economy, and personal advancement. In the 1980s, programs for the bottom half of society got the deepest cuts. It wasn't all "welfare," either. The Labor Dept.'s manpower training programs were hit hard as well.

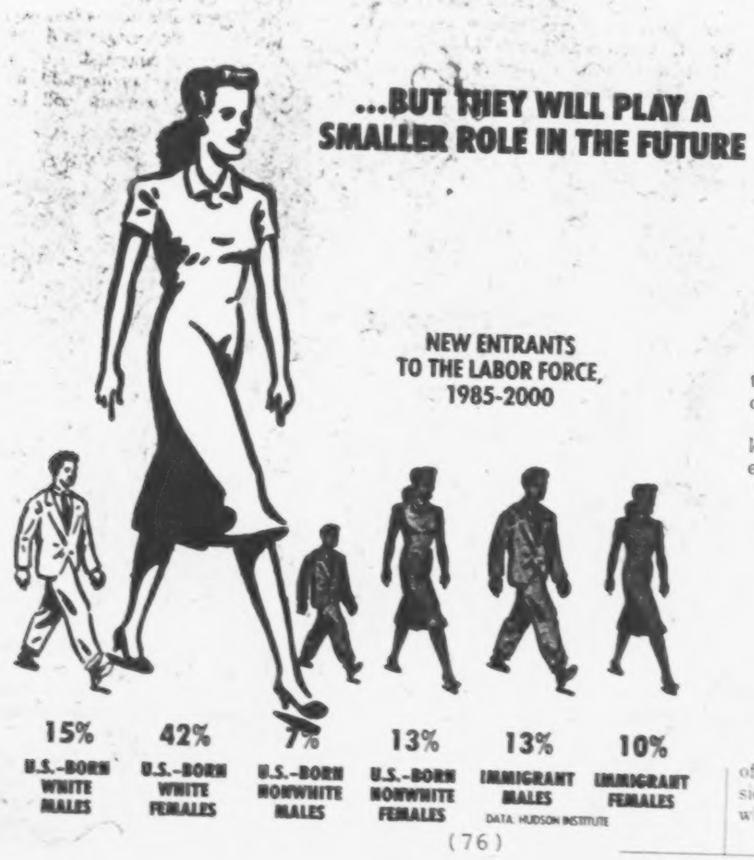
Those cuts in training could not have been timed worse. "The split between the top half and bottom half in society has been widening for the past decade, no matter how you cut the data," says Harvard University's Richard B. Freeman. "The educated, the skilled, and people in certain industries and jobs have done well. The rest have not." This inequality can only worsen if the human-capital deficit is not solved. The internationalization of the economy in the 1980s pitted the U. S. labor force against workers around the world. The results? "Trade has killed the earnings prospects for less educated people," says Freeman. "They must compete with lower-wage people overseas. As long as we trade with Korea, the less educated will have a problem."

That competition has proved devastating. From 1959 to 1986, earnings for young men who quit high school fell by 26%, adjusted for inflation. Even high-school grads saw their earnings drop by 9%, while those of college graduates rose by 6%.

In the final analysis, wage gains and losses mirror what is happening to worker productivity. The huge decline in the wages of America's unskilled labor force shows that it is no longer competitive in the international economy. The productivity of the unskilled is plummeting, while worker productivity abroad is soaring. This could signal major losses in the battle for world markets. The U. S. may now be entering an era when neglect of the bottom half of society begins to threaten the welfare of the entire nation.

In the following articles the editors of BUSINESS WEEK lay out the dimensions of the human-capital crisis—and what the country must do about it.

By Bruce Nussbaum in New York



DATA: HUDSON INSTITUTE

WHERE THE JOBS ARE IS WHERE THE SKILLS AREN'T

As work becomes more knowledge-intensive, employers are fishing in a shrinking labor pool

In a dynamic economy there is always a gap between job demands and worker skills. Through most of its history, the U.S. has managed to keep that gap small. But not anymore. The nation is facing a monumental mismatch between jobs and the ability of Americans to do them.

Unless the U.S. invests more to close this human capital deficit, the economy will be shunted onto a lower growth track. The drive to improve technology and productivity could founder on a shortage of competent workers. There will be a social price, too: Lower-skilled minorities will find it harder than ever to land good jobs. The earnings differential that already is growing between the top and bottom halves of the work force could get even larger. The nation could become further polarized between skilled and unskilled workers.

NEW YARDSTICK. Three forces are combining to produce the leap in the skills the economy will require. First, technology is upgrading the work required in most jobs. The modern workplace needs people with high reading and math capabilities, so millions of jobs go unfilled while the army of the unskilled remains unemployed.

Second, job growth will be fast mainly in high-skill occupations. Most of these jobs will be in the service sector. This kind of work now requires knowledge that wasn't necessary 20 years ago.

Finally, the way in which work now is being organized requires a completely new set of skills. As companies shift from the old models of assembly-line production to Japanese-style work teams, employees will have to sharpen their abilities to communicate.

A detailed look at how new workers will match up against new jobs between now and the year 2000 tells the story (chart). The Labor Dept. has devised a method for measuring, on a scale of one to six, the levels of reading, writing, and vocabulary needed to perform a wide range of jobs. The Hudson Institute, an economic think tank, has matched the new jobs that the economy will create against these scales. Here is what they found:

More than three-quarters of the nation's new workers will have limited verbal and writing skills (Levels 1 and 2). But they will be competing for only 40% of the new jobs. Most new jobs will require workers who have solid reading and writing skills, but fewer than one in four new employees will be able to function at the needed levels. Retail sales, for example, will be among the occupations providing the most new jobs. To fill those jobs, most retail employees will have to function at Level Three. They will have to write up orders, compute price lists, and read merchandise catalogs. Sound simple? Nevertheless, Hudson estimates that just 22% of the new employees will be able to function at Level Three or better.

For jobs in nursing or management, the educational ante is higher. Most of these jobs, which often require more than a high-school education, need skills at Level Four or above: an ability to read journals and manuals, write reports, and understand complex terminology. Just 5% of the new employees will be able to do that.

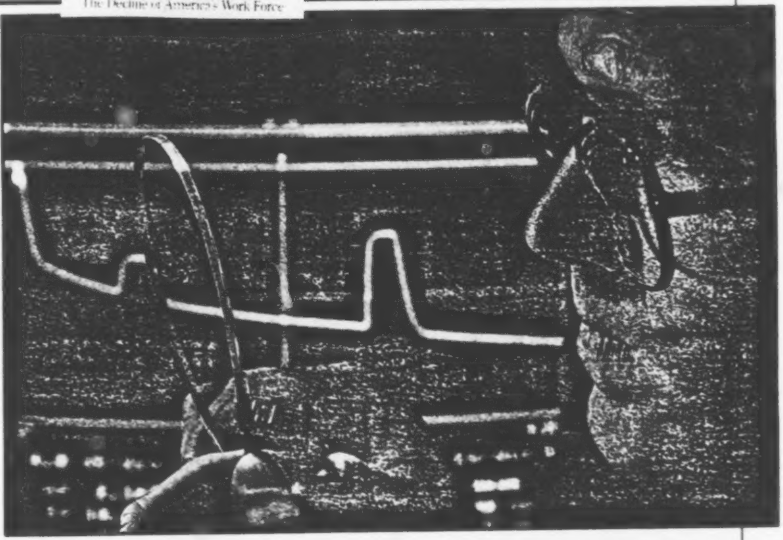
DAUNTING TASK. As many as 50 million workers may have to be trained or retrained in the next 12 years—21 million new entrants and 30 million current workers. The most daunting task ahead is to educate and train the young work force entrants. The decline in the number of 21- to 25-year-olds means that employers now must dig deeper into the barrel of the poorly educated. And a larger proportion of new workers will be minorities and immigrants, who tend to have less education and fewer skills than other employees.

Minorities are the neediest of these new workers. But as employers become increasingly dependent on them, minorities are lagging behind in reading and writing skills. And those already working tend to be stuck in occupations that are disappearing, while few have jobs in growing industries (table, page 108).

As the economy continues to expand, big companies are looking harder for new workers. But many minorities with low skills still aren't being hired. Last year, Nynex Corp.'s New York Telephone Co. had to test some 60,000 applicants—many of whom were minorities—to hire 3,000 people. "There are lots of people who still want jobs, but they're dropouts who aren't qualified," says Howard Harman, New York Telephone's director of employment.

People who already are working will need massive retraining to keep pace with changing job requirements. They are the 30 million who will need more math and science to operate computers and robots on the assembly lines or better reading and writing skills to keep up in the office.

True, many companies are using technology to replace workers—but those employees who stay on the job generally must improve their skills. For instance, New York Telephone has used new technology to help shrink its work force, which now numbers about 50,000, compared with 106,000 in the early 1970s. Nonetheless, the company has been forced to increase its in-house training rapidly to upgrade the skills of its remaining workers. NYT has four technology-learning centers where employees are taught to operate the handheld computers that telephone repairers use to keep track of orders. One five-day course retrains skilled splicing technicians who install overhead telephone cable. "Before, they handled 100-pound wire that was 6 inches in diameter," says Ray Bucaria, New York Telephone's director of training. "Now they must learn to use fiber optics, which means splicing very delicate fibers—like a brain surgeon, almost."


KEN KERBS

TIME TO REWIRE

As New York Telephone switches to fiber optics, it's rushing to retrain workers—proof that the skills gap affects longtime employees as well as recruits

A growing number of companies go so far as to train the employees of their suppliers. In the early 1980s, Xerox Corp. found that its product quality was much poorer than that of its rivals. Management decided suppliers were a big part of the problem. Xerox reduced its 3,000-odd suppliers to about 350 and raised tolerance standards for parts it buys from them.

Xerox then began a program to train its suppliers in Japanese-style quality control. Typically, a company employee trains the supplier's management, and the supplier then trains its own work force in the new methods. Xerox initially will train about 100 of its 350 suppliers, at an estimated cost of $1.5 million. "Training suppliers has become a permanent part of the way we do business," declares Robert Fletcher, who manages material quality assurance at Xerox. Motorola Inc. goes further: It even trains its suppliers' suppliers' work forces.

General Motors Corp. had to retrain workers when it opened a new truck plant a year and a half ago in Fort Wayne, Ind. The plant does have some spiffy new technology. But more important, it has a new team-production system. Both workers and management had to go through intensive training in group dynamics and problem-solving to increase manufacturing productivity.

"Our people never heard of this until a few years ago," says Don Davis, the union head of a GM/UAW joint training program in Detroit. In all, Fort Wayne's 3,000 employees took 1.9 million hours of training, including time to learn the new technology. That's more than 633 hours per worker.

Companies are now spending some $30 billion a year on worker training. A lot of that money is going to upgrade the skills of office workers. Take Mary Ann Moscillo. After her father died, she dropped out of school at 16 to work as a clerk in the mail room at Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts. She wasn't able to advance on the job for almost a decade. Then she enrolled in a remedial education program run and paid for by Blue Cross, and she learned reading, math, and history. Armed with a new high school diploma, Moscillo has had three promotions. Now, she compares claims made by hospitals with payments Blue Cross makes to them, finding and explaining variances between the two.

BABY BUST. The churning economy is generating millions of displaced workers. They account for more than one-half of the people already at work who will need retraining by 2000. Throughout the 1980s, some 2.3 million workers have been displaced each year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Roughly 1 million long-term workers—those on the job three years or more—have been displaced annually. Approximately 30% of these lack basic skills—reading, writing, and arithmetic. Consequently, a third never found new jobs at all. Others found work but at substantially lower pay.

Elite workers, as well, could be in short supply. Because of demographic trends, the U. S. is facing a long-term shortage of scientists and engineers. The number of both has climbed steadily in the past two decades, but only because the baby boom brought many young people into the labor force. The percentage of students who choose these fields has actually remained constant: In the past 30 years, the proportion of 22-year-olds acquiring bachelors' degrees in science and engineering has remained within a narrow band of 3.7% to 4.3%, according to the National Science Foundation (NSF).

If this trend continues, the baby bust could cause growing shortages. If just 4% of students continue to choose science or engineering, the NSF warns, there could be a cumulative shortfall of more than 400,000 science and engineering BAs through the year 2000. Half of all engineering students at the graduate and postgraduate levels already are foreigners. And this country is facing a shortage of 27,000 PhDs by the end of the century.

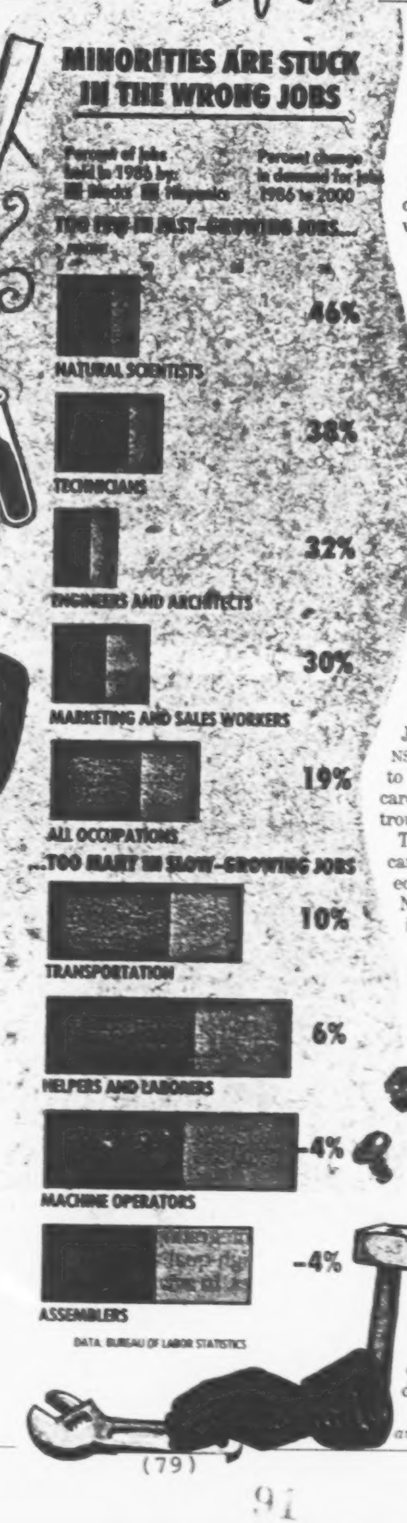
Economists are quick to point out that in these relatively high-paying fields, shortages are likely to push up salaries and attract more people. But there's little evidence that previous shortages enticed more students to scientific fields.

GROWING GAP. In addition, market mechanisms may not work quickly enough to remedy shortfalls of PhDs, who require an additional six to eight years of schooling. "Usually the decision to enter science is made in high school," says John H. Moore, deputy director of the NSF. "We need to do something today to get teens thinking seriously about careers in these fields—or we'll be in trouble."

The skills gap poses a threat to American society that goes beyond simply the economy. Currently, labor shortages in New England and elsewhere are driving up wages for jobs in fast-food eateries. If new workers don't become better qualified, this situation may change drastically as shortages move up the skills ladder. Many new job-seekers could wind up competing for a dwindling number of low-skilled jobs, while higher-skilled jobs go begging for want of qualified workers.

That would drive down wages for low-skilled workers, who can least afford it, and raise wages for skilled employees, who are already better paid. The social consequences of this are clear. Warns Irwin S. Kirsch, a researcher at Educational Testing Service in Princeton, N. J.: "If we don't boost the skills of the bottom ranks of the work force, we'll have an even more divided society than we do now."

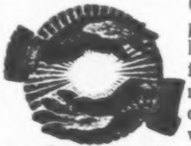
By Aaron Bernstein in New York and bureau reports



DATA: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS, A NEW WORLD OF WORKERS

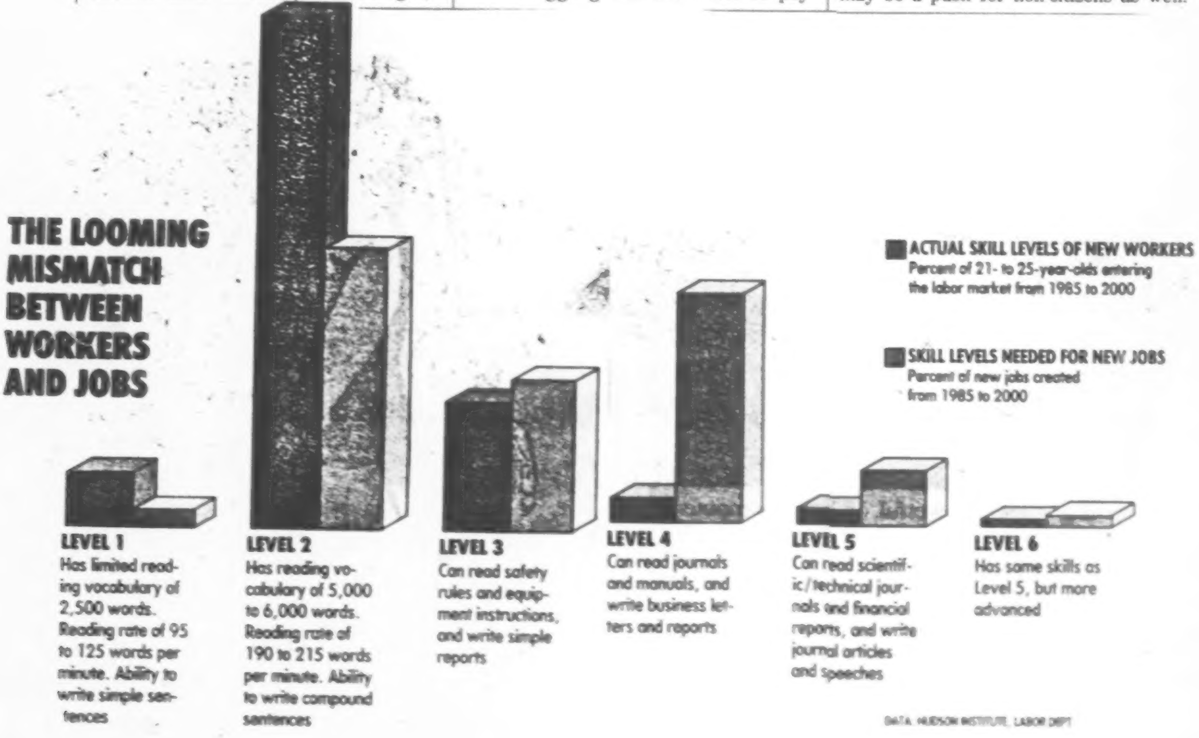
Employers must look to the nonmale, nonwhite, and nonyoung—and competition will be vicious



Once upon a simpler time not so long ago, "work force" meant white men in ties or blue collars. The image was never quite exact. One generation back, as the nation settled into postwar prosperity, 30% of all women worked outside the home—even if *Leave It to Beaver* reflected the cultural ideal of family life. "Negro," "Oriental," and "Spanish-American" workers always have helped to do America's work. But with a plentiful labor supply, few employers had to reach beyond the male Caucasian in his prime except for the least-wanted jobs. Indeed, by the late 1960s, as employers awarded self-winding watches to 65-year-olds, the first fresh-faced baby boomers were on their way to Personnel.

The last of that numerous cohort is now straggling into the world of paychecks and withholding taxes. The boss is losing that confident glow. The decline in birth rates after 1960 has slashed the numbers of young people available to fill jobs right up to the year 2010 and maybe beyond.

The years of picky hiring are over. Vicious competition for all sorts of workers—entry-level, skilled, seasoned—has begun. Employers must look to the nonmale, the nonwhite, the nonyoung. There may be a push for non-citizens as well:



THE LOOMING MISMATCH BETWEEN WORKERS AND JOBS

DATA: HUDSON INSTITUTE, LABOR DEPT.

Over the next 10 years, predicts the Hudson Institute, an economic think tank, only 15% of work force entrants will be native-born white males.

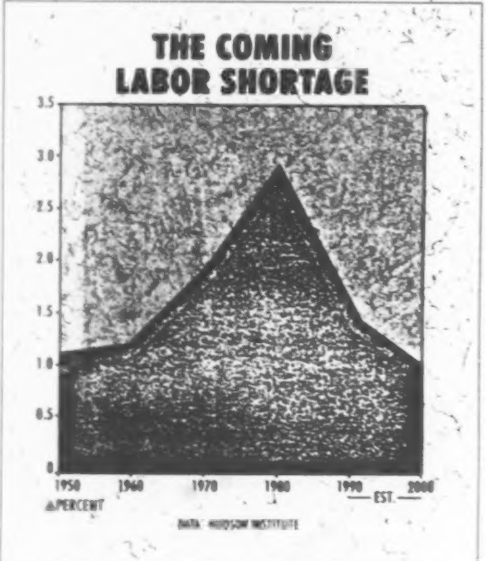
Building a new, more diverse work force and making it tick will be one of Corporate America's biggest challenges in the decade ahead.

MOTHER, DAUGHTER, WORKER, WIFE

In the past 15 years, as women ventured into the workplace in growing numbers, it has been widely expected that employers would take major steps to accommodate their special needs. So far, though, employers have been able to hire 52% of all women without doing much very differently. That's partly because in a world of stagnant real earnings, women and their families have needed the money more than companies needed the women. Feminism, higher education levels, and rising expectations pushed women into the work force, too.

But as employers fish in a shrinking pool for new workers and try to retain experienced ones, women will be in a position to make demands. Companies will be forced to make it easier for workers to balance work and family.

Three-quarters of working women are in their childbearing years; more than half of all mothers work. Those with children younger than 6 make up the fastest-growing segment of the work force. For many such women, as well as for their spouses, balancing work life with parenting at a distance presents logistical challenges worthy of an air traffic controller.



DATA: HUDSON INSTITUTE

It isn't only children. As the U.S. population becomes older—and by 2000, 51% will be between 35 and 54—more people must take responsibility for their parents. Americans are living longer, thanks to better nutrition and medical breakthroughs, but those beyond the age of 75 are often ill or infirm. Services are expensive, so care usually falls to family members—many of whom work. About 40% of workers over age 40 already provide care to parents, according to Anthony Gajda of Mercer-Meidinger-Hansen, an employee-benefits firm. About 12% of women who care for aging parents must quit their jobs to do so.

A growing body of research links employees' concerns for the care of children or elderly relatives with productivity losses from increased absences, tardiness, and stress on the job—and such time-wasters as excessive use of the phone. This holds for men in dual-career marriages as well as for single fathers and single sons. But it's particularly true for women. At Touche Ross & Co., Susan Schiffer Stautberg figures the average working woman spends 17 years raising kids and 19 years caring for aging relatives. Her grim joke: "Middle age is the 15 minutes in between."

The productivity issues are greater than a workday lost when the babysitter walks out or Grandma breaks her hip. Family leaves, allowing parents time off to care for a new baby or deal with a family crisis, help retain women workers and boost morale and loyalty among others as well. A 1986 report by the General Accounting Office indicated that such policies don't cost much even though temporary workers may have to fill in or other staff may have to work overtime. Legislation requiring employers to provide unpaid family leave to care for sick relatives or new babies is on Congress' agenda.

Child care, especially, is politically hot. A $2.5 billion bill sponsored by Senator Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.) and Representative Dale E. Kildee (D-Mich.) would set quality standards for child care, provide payment vouchers to families, and provide states with funds to add new facilities. Michael Dukakis backs the bill's concept without endorsing the dollar amount. George Bush wants a $1,000-per-child tax credit for poor families where at least one parent works, to be used for child care or to help mothers stay home.

'CARE-GIVERS.' There is widespread agreement that the federal government has some role to play, beyond the current $3.9 billion dependent-care tax credit, the $660 million spent on day care, and $1.5 billion for the Head Start early childhood program for disadvantaged kids. States, expanding their programs, are crying for more funding. California subsidizes day care for low-income toddlers. Texas school districts provide prekindergarten for 4-year-olds from poor families. Massachusetts is trying to increase the supply of child care with loans to build centers and grants to expand referral programs, train "care-givers," and pay them more.

The problem, however, is falling increasingly into the corporate lap. Boston University researchers Bradley K. Googins and Dianne S. Burden recently surveyed 1,500 workers in big corporations. Some 43% said employers and government should share responsibility for helping balance work and family life; 41% said companies should take the lead.

About 60% do offer some degree of work-schedule flexibility. But less than 5% of U.S. companies—a grand total of 3,300—help with child care. Most of those either allow employ-

ees to save tax dollars by setting aside pretax income for day care in flexible benefit plans, or they provide information and referral advice. Only 250 or 300 companies have helped start child-care centers.

It's likely that more women would enter the job market if they could find good child care. In the 1982 census, 26% of all nonworking mothers with preschoolers said they would look for work if "reasonably priced child care were available." An additional 13% said they would work more hours. If half the women claiming they are so constrained went to work in the 1990s, the labor force would gain 850,000 workers, notes Columbia University economist David E. Bloom.

DROPPING IN

After Bostonian Sandra Brown, single parent of three, told her welfare caseworker she was "job-ready," she enrolled in a program at Roxbury Community College where she's studying word-processing and finishing high school. Her employer is helping with the tuition bills

A BENEFIT. Indeed, some companies are looking at child care as a recruiting device, especially in clerical, food service, and hospital jobs, which depend on women workers. But the impetus is growing elsewhere. Faced with a local labor shortage, Echo Bay Mines Ltd. at Round Mountain, Nev., has enticed parents to hire on for swing shifts by keeping open its on-site day care center 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Eastman Kodak Co. helps its American employees look for child care. In addition, the company is experimenting with job-sharing. Two Rochester (N. Y.) mothers with young children split the title "professional recruiter": their 24-hour stints overlap on Wednesdays. Kodak allows up to 17 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a spouse, parent, sick child, or new baby, including adopted or foster children. "We have a lot of money invested in training. This is protecting our investment," declares Mary J. Harrington, Kodak's corporate employee relations director.

Corporate efforts to help workers cope with elderly parents are still primitive. Most women must find ad hoc solutions. A quarter of those responsible for aged parents take extended leaves or cut down their work hours. The challenge is to keep them on the job as much as possible by providing social supports for the parents. As the pressures of labor shortage build, companies will also have to see to it that employees don't forfeit seniority or status if they are forced to take time off for family reasons. "I really think demographics are destiny here," says Dana E. Friedman, work and family research director at the Conference Board.

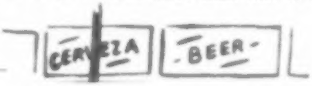
YOUNG, TROUBLED, AND IN DEMAND

It has been a long time since America's population profile bore much resemblance to the party that landed at Plymouth Rock. Now this nation of ethnicity and social flux is changing anew. It is becoming less white and more Spanish-speaking. Birth rates among blacks exceed those of whites. Immigration, mainly from Latin America and Asia, has accounted for a fifth of America's population growth in the 1980s. Compared with the native-born, immigrants are younger and their families are larger. The youth cohort of the work force is shrinking, but more of its members will be black, Hispanic, or Asian.

These changes have significant implications for the U. S. work force. A disproportionate number of these youths are growing up in families that are poor or headed by single parents. In minority communities, many of today's adults lack the skills to find decent employment. Their kids face worse prospects at a time of dramatic technological change. A disturbing new term, underclass, describes some who are from such disorganized backgrounds that—without intervention or a social miracle—they may never be employable (page 122).

Many young people—especially minorities—are caught in a vicious cycle. About a quarter of all kids are born out of wedlock to parents who "are poorly educated, frequently young, and unskilled," says George Washington University's Sar Levitan. In the U. S., about 44% of all marriages fail. Female-headed households are more than four times more likely to be poor than are two-parent families. A startling one in four members of the Class of 2000, now entering first grade, is living in poverty.

Part of the problem is child support. Fewer than half of fathers not living with their kids pay anything toward their keep. In 1985 more than half of all



HUMAN CAPITAL

The Decline of America's Work Force

mothers with child-support orders received less than the full amount due. The average annual payment was $2,315. Another aspect of the poverty problem is women's pay. Women's earnings average $16,232, 70% of men's. Many mothers work part-time for far less pay.

Harvard sociologist David Ellwood predicts that more than two-thirds of children who grow up in a single-parent household will spend at least some of their childhood in poverty. They are three times more likely than others to drop out of school, and they are more deficient in skills. Black and Hispanic children, while a minority of the poor, are nearly three times more likely to be poor than whites. A National Assessment of Educational Progress found that only 60% of white young adults could locate information in a news article or an almanac. The number was 25% for blacks and 40% for Hispanics.

Labor shortages in the future could present an unprecedented opportunity to improve the lot of the poor. "The new workers—although they are from groups disadvantaged by discrimination, lack of education, and language barriers—will be in very great demand," says Labor Secretary Ann D. McLaughlin. Already employers are having to reach further and further along the labor queue. Where necessary, they are patching up the ragtag skills they find there, sometimes at huge expense (page 134).

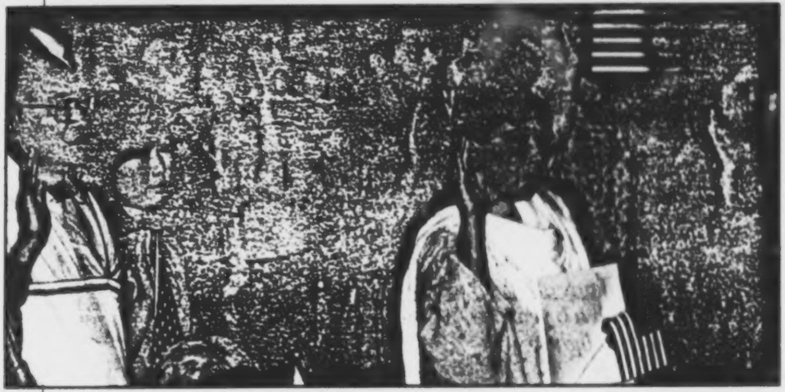
Social thinkers say early intervention, with such proven child-development programs as Head Start—or even earlier with nutrition programs and parenting classes—is the real ticket to building a competent work force over time. Half of all teenage mothers eventually escape poverty through education, with measurable improvements in their kids' achievement and prospects, notes economist Andrew Sum of Northeastern University. "If minorities are to succeed, we have got to start educating children much younger and work through their parents," says Gloria G. Rodriguez, director of a support and training program for poor Hispanic families in San Antonio. Despite its track record, only 18% of eligible children are served by Head Start, due to inadequate funding.

The challenge is clear. If minority skills are not upgraded, they will deteriorate further. Companies will be forced to substitute capital for the unskilled labor. Technology, after all, has many faces. Given skilled workers, it can upgrade a job task and add value. Or, to cope with work-force shortcomings, it can be used to "de-skill." The classic example is McDonald's Corp. Dependent on young workers with poor skills, the hamburger chain has replaced words on the keys of its cash registers with pictures. That may work for McDonald's. But for society to take that path implies low wages and a declining standard of living.

BRINGING THE RETIRED BACK FROM RETIREMENT

In our time, the shrinking of the American manufacturing sector has written off a generation of middle-aged blue-collar workers caught between the foundry and the computer. And even as the economy faces labor shortages at all levels, the most striking employment trend in recent years has been a shift to early retirement. Only about 15% of men over age 65 are in the work force today, down from 25% in 1970. Only 68% of those age 55 to 64 still work, compared with 83% two decades ago.

Such trends were perhaps understandable as baby boomers crowded into the workplace and companies downsized. Today, though, it is waste on a vast



UL GRANGE/BW

NEW CITIZENS

Opening America's "Golden Door" has helped with past labor shortages, but swelling waves of immigration might serve to stall efforts to integrate blacks, Hispanics, and women into the economy more effectively

scale. A typical American who has reached the age of 65 can expect to live an additional 17 years. By 2003 the U. S. National Center for Health Statistics predicts life expectancies at birth will be 84 years for women and 10 years less for men. Today the 58-year-old who takes early retirement is essentially middle-aged, and retirement may last half as long as his or her work life did.

The good health, skills, and work histories of the "young old" can help the nation out of its demographic fix. "People should work longer and be productive longer. We should get away from the rigidities that go along with age 65," argues Alan Pifer, chairman of the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis.

Pifer, who directed the Carnegie Corporation's Project on Aging, advocates continual education and retraining throughout one's working life. The emphasis should be on that restless age around 50 when the kids are gone and "you've gone about as high as you're going to go in the hierarchy. It would be nice if a lot of people could be 'repotted,' " he suggests. As a vision for the nation, that projects a huge agenda: reordering what is now an ad hoc and haphazard retraining process. It also requires new benefits systems, such as portable pensions, to erase disincentives for middle-aged workers to move on.

Many over-60s, furthermore, don't want to be put out to pasture for 20 years. Smart companies are finding ways to retrain and employ them. In Florida, where 18% of its population is over 65, the future is now—fast-food chains recruit workers in retirement villages. Last year, Kelly Services Inc. in Troy, Mich., put out a call for workers over 55. Now they're 8% of the "temp" rolls. In Boston, one BayBanks Inc. unit has hired 45 retirees as clericals, tellers, and clerks since last November.

Keeping older workers in the job market won't be easy. Says Census Bureau forecaster Cynthia M. Taeuber: "They can afford to retire and will." The elderly have escaped Reagan-era spending cuts. Social Security, medicare, and medicaid spending on nursing homes have eliminated most poverty among the old. Still, retirement can be boring. If business makes work attractive, the oldsters may come back in droves.

THE U.S. COULD LOWER THE DRAWBRIDGE AGAIN

Faced with labor shortages in earlier times, America has opened its borders. Immigration is still a policy option—the wild card in the labor-market outlook.

For Cornell University economist Vernon M. Briggs, unleashing even more immigration will stall efforts to integrate women, blacks, and other minorities into the economy. In a recent book, *Immigration Policy and the American Labor Force*, Briggs argues that minority youths could soon be competing with immigrants—legal and illegal—for entry-level jobs. Rand Corp. researchers say there's no evidence of this yet. But they warn that U. S.-born Latinos must improve their skills to qualify for the high-tech jobs of the future or compete with new immigrants for low-paid jobs.

Today's immigrants, on average, are less skilled than the native-born. Most lack a high-school education. Only 20% are admitted because their skills are in great demand. But the criteria could change toward more preference for skills. This year, U. S. hospitals, to allay shortages, will hire 20,000 foreign nurses on five-year visas.

The idea of hospitals staffed by skilled foreign professionals and low-paid native-born janitors doesn't sit well with some like Pat Choate, TRW Inc.'s futurist. "Ultimately we have to have an economy that works—and do everything with our own people," he says. Yet, he adds, the U. S. should "use its incomparable advantages" to attract the world's talent. Foreigners here to study engineering, say, could be required to stay and work.

Unlike immigration policy, population trends hold few surprises. "We have a lot of control over how demography hits us. It's more of a glacier than a thunderbolt," reflects Jack A. Meyer, president of New Directions for Policy, a Washington think tank. "If we sit back, we're in for some problems." The danger is that the U. S. will fail to address its demographic challenges in time.

By Elizabeth Ehrlich in New York, with Susan B. Garland in Washington, and bureau reports

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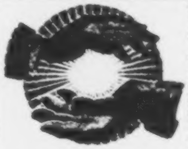
WHY THE UNDERCLASS CAN'T GET OUT FROM UNDER

In an era of prosperity, legions of welfare mothers and inner-city youths face dead-end lives



Terence Maclin often dreams of escaping Milwaukee's tough North Side. "I plan to build my own business," says the 18-year-old leader of a youth gang known as Two-Four. "Then I can have people working for me."

Maclin's fantasy of the straight life is likely to remain just that. A high school dropout who's been in and out of juvenile institutions since he was 9, Maclin can't read at a sixth-grade level. He's enrolled in a high school equivalency program but chronically cuts classes. And Maclin recently quit the latest in a series of temporary jobs after a dispute over pay.

In the past, unskilled and poorly educated black youths such as Maclin had a shot at a decent-paying job. But now, many of the breweries that made Milwaukee famous are shuttered. The city's employment boom has been concentrated largely in jobs that require skills far higher than Maclin's. "The odds are very strong that Terence will never make it," says Charles Meyer, a program director at the Westside Center, where Maclin sometimes hangs out.

Young people such as Maclin can be found in decaying inner cities all over America. They represent a chilling phenomenon: a growing black underclass isolated from the nation's economic and social mainstream. This legion of chronically unemployed males and welfare mothers, concentrated in crime-ridden, desperately poor, inner-city neighborhoods, numbers at least 1.5 million.

That figure continues to mount despite a six-year economic expansion. "The rising tide of prosperity left those without a high school diploma untouched," says John D. Kasarda, an economist and chairman of the University of North Carolina's Sociology Dept. "They were not even on the boat."

Although the underclass is relatively small in size, it reverberates across geographic, class, and racial lines. Drug-related crimes and gang wars are shaking the complacency of middle-class communities. As labor markets tighten, business has begun to worry about the growing pool of disaffected youths ill-equipped to take on new jobs. And the costs of coping with society's failures are staggering. The nation spends $20 billion annually on prisons. Caring for low-birthweight babies born to mothers on welfare who are high school dropouts costs another $188 million per year.

BURGER KING
DRIVE THRU
WEEKEND HELP
$700 HR

HANGING OUT: *Minority youths in urban ghettos such as Dorchester, Mass., (left) often eschew work even where it's available. For some, fast-food jobs paying as much as $7 an hour don't compare with the enticements of life on the street*

The growth of the underclass is the result of many complex forces—from racism to the frustration and apathy that persistent poverty can provoke. "It's very difficult to point to any one thing in an environment where so many things are hostile," says David T. Ellwood, professor of public policy at Harvard University. "But everyone agrees that all these negative things start to feed on each other, making it more difficult to latch on to any simple solution."

'KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE.' Among the most potent factors is the two-tiered economy. The economy's general weakness during the 1970s and early 1980s "hit people at the bottom of the barrel the hardest," says Brookings Institution economist Robert D. Reischauer. Starting in the 1970s, white women, baby boomers, and immigrants flooding the job market have made it even more improbable that less-educated blacks at the end of the hiring queue will be chosen for jobs.

Meanwhile, in the past two decades, manufacturing industries virtually vanished from the cities. Some closed down, skewered by international competition. Others moved to convenient, sprawling, suburban tracts. Just 25 years ago, half of Milwaukee's jobs were of the high-paying blue-collar type. Today less than 30% are. In other cities, the falloff is even more dramatic.

Many of the newer jobs are "knowledge-intensive" white-collar posts, which require at least some college education. As a result, employment of the poorly educated has fallen sharply. That is particularly true of adult black males who live in cities. Only half of these men work, even part-time, as compared with 80% in 1969, according to Kasarda.

University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson, author of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, argues that antidiscrimination legislation and affirmative-action programs may have inadvertently compounded the problems. Middle-class blacks, who could take advantage of new job and housing opportunities in the 1960s and after, fled the ghettos, leaving local schools to the poor and removing important role models—adults who work at steady jobs. Those left behind no longer hear about work opportunities. Even the habit of waking up to a ringing alarm clock is alien. "Youngsters are growing up in a community where people's lives aren't organized around work," Wilson says.

Even when jobs are available, few are perceived as true opportunities because pay is low and prospects for promotion are virtually nil. "Places give you a hassle, say they are not hiring and come back in a few months," complains Corey Newsome, a former member of Maclin's gang. In some tight labor markets, fast-food restaurants pay nearly twice the minimum wage, but local youth unemployment rates remain high. "Fast-food places aren't paying enough, not for what they want you to do," says Newsome. The lucrative alternatives—drug dealing, pimping, and theft—have no shortage of recruits, though.

The allure of criminal activity is often attributed to the disintegration of the black family. In 1960, 20% of black families with children were headed by women. Today, half are.

WELFARE TRAP? Contrary to popular perception, the birth rate for unmarried black women actually has declined since 1960. But the marriage rate among black women has dropped even more sharply—as has the birth rate to married women—so single women still bear more of the community's babies. For Wilson, the explanation is the shortage of "marriageable" black men. "The increasing inability of many black men to support a family is the driving force behind the rise of female-headed households," he says.

Some social scientists, though, believe that cultural factors have become at least as important as economic ones. "If you've got full employment, you are still going to have an underclass," argues social scientist Charles Murray. "We do not know how to change the attitudes of even adolescents who have grown up in the underclass." Murray's 1984 book, *Losing Ground*, faulted federal welfare policy for discouraging marriage and work while rewarding out-of-wedlock childbearing and unemployment.

"It's now more acceptable than ever for a father to ignore his responsi-

HOW SOCIAL INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN PAYS OFF

$1 INVESTED IN...	...SAVES
Prenatal care for poor women	$3.38 in hospital care for low birthweight babies
Childhood immunization	$10 in later medical costs
Preschool education	$4.75 in special education, welfare, and prison costs
Remedial education	$6 in the cost of repeating a grade

DATA: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

bilities," adds Stuart Butler, director of domestic policy studies at the conservative Heritage Foundation. "The assumption is that the government will take care of the problem."

Certainly, most welfare programs do little to encourage work. When recipients who want to work weigh the low-paying jobs for which they're qualified against the loss of welfare benefits, medical benefits, and the additional burden of child care, many figure they're better off staying home. "The system goes around and chokes you," says Bonita Williams, a 24-year-old mother of six who lives at the Milwaukee Family Crisis Center. Child care and job training are a focus of the new $3 billion welfare reform bill pending in Congress.

Whatever the causes of the underclass phenomenon, there is no question that the consequences for black children have been disastrous. Three-quarters of them spend at least some time in poverty, compared with one-fourth of white children. One-third of black kids are poor for seven years or more. And those growing up poor are more likely to become parents themselves at an early age. In turn, their babies are at risk from low birthweight, which tends to increase the chances of brain damage and learning disabilities.

Dr. James P. Comer, professor of child psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Center, says children of uneducated parents are less likely to develop the early language skills and excitement for learning that will prepare them for school. Fully 60% of daughters of single women who are on welfare for 10 years or more will find themselves on welfare for at least a year during adulthood. Urban Institute economist Isabel V. Sawhill worries that underclass communities will be "breeding grounds for another generation of poor people with little hope of becoming part of the mainstream."

SAVE THE CHILD: *Improved services for children, such as day care for disadvantaged kids in New York's East Harlem, may be the surest way to break the cycle of poverty*

To break the chain, some black leaders are calling on the black middle class for assistance. Others are saying that poor blacks themselves must accept greater responsibility—and that their community offers positive models, too. "There are kids who are not on drugs and teenagers who are not getting pregnant," says Robert L. Woodson, president of the Washington-based National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, which encourages tenant management of public housing projects as well as other community self-help programs. "We need to learn from people who are successful."

Improving the schools that poor children attend is critical as well (page 129). So is reaching the child before school. Last year the Committee for Economic Development, a corporate-funded research group, recommended $11 billion in additional spending on prenatal care and nutrition for pregnant women and preschool education for the nation's most disadvantaged kids. Their point is that intervening at an early age may well improve a child's lifelong prospects (chart, page 123) and save money on other social programs, such as welfare, down the line.

Some experts believe that expanding programs such as Medicaid and Head Start is only a first step. Harvard lecturer Lisbeth B. Schorr says that social service agencies have to do a better job of coordinating the services they deliver to poor families, who often suffer from a spectrum of problems. An agency that provides preschool education to a child without addressing a parent's depression or the child's nearsightedness won't help much. "The programs that work best are comprehensive and intensive," she says.

INTIMIDATED. Encouraging the employment of young adults is another necessity. In Boston, a successful business-backed program is teaching 150 poor adults such workplace skills as résumé-writing, interviewing procedures, and telephone etiquette. James B. Marshall Jr., who is in charge of the program, says many youths are intimidated by the prospect of leaving isolated ghettos such as Roxbury to work in a downtown glass tower. Other programs that provide intensive remedial education, job training, and child care have helped long-term welfare mothers enter the labor force.

North Carolina's Kasarda believes that suburban employers must reach out as well through job information networks and provide transportation pools. Marshall says that employers, who are often reluctant to hire inner-city youths, "have to understand that their personnel in the next 10 years is going to be different from what they're used to."

This realization is the product of demographic trends that in some areas are already producing labor shortages among young, entry-level workers. However, federal policymakers, worried about yawning budget deficits, seem unlikely to launch a major new effort to address the problems. There is little political gain to be had from aiding the powerless underclass, and indeed, the Presidential candidates have not taken up their cause.

Yet, argues Princeton sociologist Richard Nathan, "if there was ever a time to work at these issues, it's now, when there's a declining labor force." If America lets this opportunity pass, it will do so at its own social and economic peril.

By Susan B. Garland in Washington, with Lois Therrien in Milwaukee and Keith H. Hammonds in Boston

HUMAN CAPITAL

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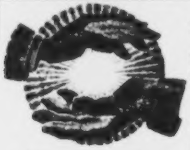
AMERICA'S SCHOOLS STILL AREN'T MAKING THE GRADE

A quarter of high school grads are only marginally literate—and reformers disagree on what to fix

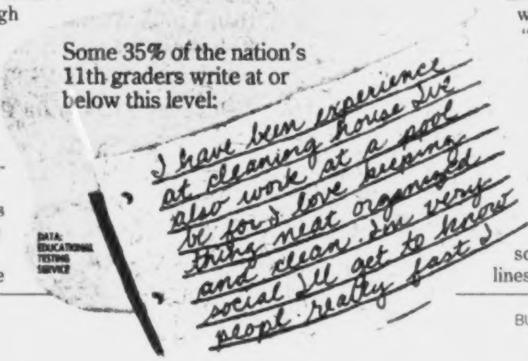


Americans have always asked a lot of their schools: Civilize the frontier with the three Rs, assimilate immigrants, secure U. S. military might by bolstering high school science. At its most fundamental, democracy aspires to produce literate, responsible citizens. But social and economic change has continually reshaped what school is expected to do—from training homemakers to fostering integration.

A new call for school reform is ringing across the land. This one is different: The nation's economic problems are being placed at the schoolhouse door. Economic growth, competitiveness, and living standards depend heavily on making investments in human capital. That means attending to the state of America's schools.

It is a worrisome state. Although top-ranked U. S. students compare well with their peers in industrialized nations, the rest do worse. One million young people drop out of high school every year. Rates approach 50% in some inner cities. Of the 2.4 million who graduate, as many as 25% cannot read or write at the eighth-grade, or "functionally literate," level, according to some estimates. Most 17-year-olds in school cannot summarize a newspaper article, write a good letter requesting a job, solve real-life math problems, or follow a bus schedule.

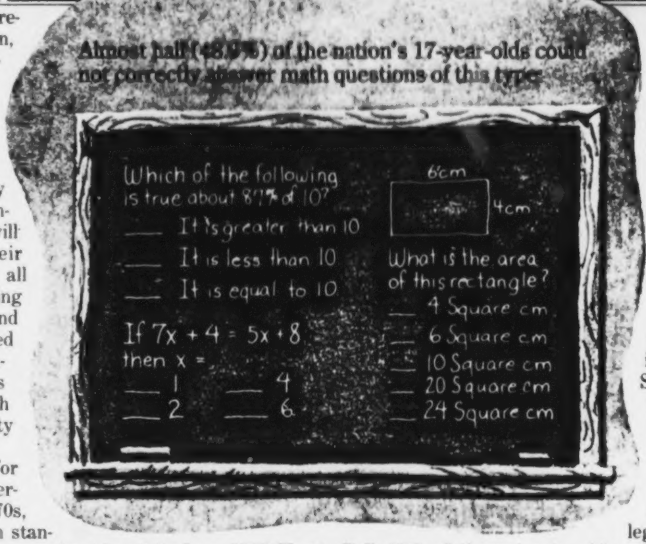
What's needed is a do-or-die battle to turn the schools around. But the front lines are weary—and fresh recruits



Some 35% of the nation's 11th graders write at or below this level:

I have been experience at cleaning house I've also work at a pool be for I love keeping thing neat organized and clean. I'm very social I'll get to know people really fast I

DATA: EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE


Almost half (48.9%) of the nation's 17-year-olds could not correctly answer math questions of this type:

are scarce. Between retirement and normal attrition, America could need to replace 1 million teachers—half the current force—before the end of the century. But only 8% of today's 1.6 million college freshmen say they're interested in teaching, and half of those will typically change their minds. Worse, half of all new hires leave teaching within seven years. And with shortages of educated workers looming throughout the economy, schools will be competing with other sectors for quality candidates.

'LEMONS.' The demand for school reform has been percolating since the mid-1970s, when declining results on standardized tests raised concerns about basic skills. It exploded in 1983, after the National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation at Risk*. Warning of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in public schools, it called for rigorous academic standards and a standardized, traditional high school curriculum of history, Western literature, foreign languages, science, and math.

Critics still blast the report as elitist or oversimplified. But few deny that our schools need fixing. "If a company was turning out 90% lemons, we would rethink the whole production process," says Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). "This is not a question of a few recalls. The system is producing lemons."

Most Americans want to do something about it. In a 1987 Harris Poll, 90% of those surveyed endorsed the principle that "for the U. S. to become competitive, we must pay more for quality education" and get "tangible results."

The tricky question: how to get those results. Educators are sharply divided. Some endorse the call for strengthening the traditional curriculum. AFT's Shanker would give teachers a freer hand to restructure the classroom environment. Others say schools must take on new family-like roles to nurture the growing numbers of poor or troubled kids in the system.

Predictably, conservatives deride the idea that schools should depart from traditional teaching formulas to suit individual learning styles or to respond to students' social problems. They stress the importance of expectation and high standards, holding up such examples as William Lloyd Garrison School, where South Bronx kids from low-income families test at or above grade levels in reading. "You don't change the principles of medicine when patients have poorer health or a poorer state of nutrition," insists outgoing Education Secretary William J. Bennett. When Bennett urges school overhaul, he means a shift of power from the educational Establishment—teachers' unions, administrators, and colleges of education—to parents, citizens, and state legislatures.

Traditionalists point to Japan, where students seem to perform as well as or better at all levels than U. S. kids. Japanese mothers are highly involved in their children's schooling, teachers are respected and well-paid, the school year is longer, and more homework is given. "The Japanese system," says Bennett, "is pretty close to a system of education that is universal and of quality."

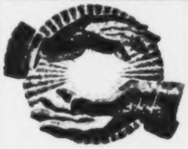
MASS PRODUCTION. Those for whom tradition is not a panacea say American schools must change with the times. They argue that the public school system was organized along factory lines in the 1920s by a society enchanted by mass production. Classrooms were standardized, and decisions about teaching methods and content were passed from state offices to superintendents to principals and finally to the chalk-wielding line workers: teachers. After a 50-minute class, the bell rang and pupils moved on. "If the student is viewed as an inanimate object moving on an assembly line, this makes perfect sense," Shanker says.

'THOROUGHLY DISCREDITED.' Successful companies, as Xerox Corp. Chairman David T. Kearns notes in *Winning the Brain Race*, "have discarded the archaic, outmoded, and thoroughly discredited practices that are still in place in most of our large school districts: top-down, command-control management—a system designed to stifle creativity and independent judgment."

To education reformers, it is significant that the Japanese themselves are beginning to worry that their nation's learning style, heavily based on rote and memorization, doesn't promote creative thinking and flexible skills. "In Japan they do harder and longer what we do, and get better results," argues Adam Urbanski, president of the Rochester (N. Y.) Teachers Assn. "The purpose of reform is to do it differently—to challenge the fundamental structure."

Indeed, concerns about basic skills already have produced some improvements along traditional lines. Educational Testing Service (ETS), a testing-and-research organization based in Princeton, N. J., reports that test scores in math, reading, computer literacy, and science have gone up since the mid-1970s. Most of that came from minority kids, who increased from 16% to 23% of all schoolchildren. But "the bad news is that we haven't budged in improving higher-order skills, critical-thinking skills," says Archie E. LaPointe, head of ETS's National Assess-

BUSINESS IS BECOMING A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER



New York's Chemical Bank has an alarming problem: It has to interview 40 high school graduates to find one who makes it through the bank's training program for new tellers. The Chemical reaction? The bank has adopted two schools and is helping form a high school debating league. Chemical Chairman Walter V. Shipley believes parental involvement is the ideal: "Unfortunately you don't always have that commitment from parents, so business must try to find more ways to fill the gap."

Passion for school reform is gripping Corporate America. It is marshaling resources, energy, and influence to improve education. Hundreds of partnerships are blooming between school and business. They run the gamut: gifts of equipment, paid work-study programs, teacher training, and literacy volunteers. But there are questions about the effectiveness and reach of these programs. The biggest unknown is whether business will have the patience to stay the course.

Many join-a-school partnerships have been forged. In 1981, New York industrialist Eugene Lang addressed a sixth-grade class at his Harlem alma mater and offered college scholarships to all pupils who stayed in school. He paid for remedial and counseling staff and became involved with the kids. Of the 54 original pupils who remained in New York, 50 finished high school, and 34 are in college.

The recipe has been followed by corporations as well. More than 1,000 Dallas businesses have adopted the city's 200 public schools. The sponsors provide volunteers and donate funds and equipment. At Tenth Street Elementary School in Los Angeles, 125 Arco Oil & Gas Co. employees—from secretaries to top brass—help out in the classrooms, tutoring immigrant and minority students in English, math, geography, and computer sciences.

Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Co. in Seattle adopted a local school. But this modest involvement mushroomed in 1983 thanks to Gary A. Frizzell, PNB's new educational relations manager, who happened to be coping off-hours with an apathetic 14-year-old son. He tried to reach the boy with heart-to-heart talks and a series of letters—which evolved into *Choices*, an outreach program encouraging kids to stay in school. Volunteers from 65 participating companies have addressed more than 300,000 eighth and ninth graders in 41 states. "Business is the user of education's product—students, and it ought to replenish," says Frizzell, now heading an education foundation for PNB's parent, U. S. West in Denver.

SOWING SEEDS

'Adopt-a-school' programs are sprouting up. At Los Angeles' Tenth Street Elementary School, an Arco professional leads a nature class

Businesses are focusing on teachers, as well. Two years ago, IBM Vice-Chairman Lewis M. Branscomb headed a Carnegie Forum task force that recommended higher pay, more autonomy, and national competence testing for teachers. Honeywell Inc. sponsors a summer Teacher Academy, where Minneapolis high school math and science teachers team up with rement of Educational Progress (NAEP).

It's higher order skills that a sophisticated economy increasingly needs. "Over the long term, basic skills only give you the right to compete against the Third World for Third World wages," notes Marc S. Tucker, chairman of the National Center on Education & the Economy in Rochester, N.Y. To achieve more advanced goals, "I'd like to see a lot less of kids sitting quietly in rows and a lot more deeply engaged in projects in which they are heavily invested, which require them to learn a lot."

Tucker maintains that most kids don't learn well by listening to a lecture or reading the text. He and others advocate peer tutoring, team learning, simulation games, and other nontraditional approaches, particularly for disadvantaged children for whom formal classrooms are threatening ground.

So passionate is the debate that reform is threatened with paralysis by analysis. No single educational philosophy can be expected to win the day in a country as heterogeneous as the U.S. What might work in a high-income suburban school district could create havoc in an inner-city ghetto. And there are no quick fixes. "Imagine a business . . . with 50 totally autonomous divisions and 16,000 subsidiaries, each with its own board of directors and labor agreements," says retired Procter & Gamble Chairman Owen B. Butler. "No effort to change that culture can be expected to succeed in five years."

TEACHER TROUBLE. Whether it's traditionalism or radical reform, better schools require more and better teachers. And here there is trouble. Morale among teachers, who are poorly paid and garner little esteem, is at low ebb. For years the numbers of college students entering teaching has been in decline, and those who do choose teaching often come from the bottom quartile of their college class. The shortage is acute for teachers of math and science and for the minority teachers desperately need-

searchers to develop class projects using state-of-the-art computers and equipment.

Minnesota companies have a tradition of social investing. Honeywell has provided equipment, volunteers, and technical advice to schools for 20 years. Last year it gave $7.8 million, about 2% of its U.S. pretax profits, to philanthropy. Of that, $2.9 million went to education.

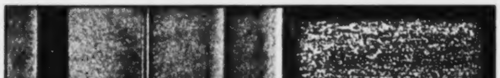
Not all educators welcome corporate largesse. Some worry there will be strings attached. "We've been in the business of education for 126 years," says Robert Astrup, president of the Minnesota Education Assn., which represents 80% of the state's teachers. "We would like businesses to be advocates—not leaders." Joan Canella, director of the Bank Street School for Children in New York, sees it another way: "The best thing business can do for schools is make it possible to combine work and family, allowing working parents to get involved with the schools."

HARD KNOCKS. Dade County, Fla., hosts one such experiment. To ease overcrowding and reduce working parents' stress, the school system set up minischools in workplaces. Last fall, American Bankers Insurance Group Inc. opened the first "satellite learning center" to serve employees. It built a $350,000 schoolhouse for 50 kindergarteners and first graders. The county provides teachers and books.

In Chicago, local companies, including Borg-Warner, Sears, Johnson Publishing, and McDonald's, opened their own school. Privately funded, tuition-free, the Corporate/Community School of Chicago is to be a laboratory-in-action addressing the problems of inner-city schools. Its enrollment, now at 150, will grow to 300 children, from nursery school to eighth grade.

Perhaps the most obvious role for business is to help bridge the gulf between high school and what comes after. That is, not pushing old-style vocational education but bringing some notion of work life and promise of opportunity to kids floundering on the margins. That was the plan behind the Boston Compact, a 1983 agreement between the Private Industry Council (PIC) and the school system to offer summer and permanent jobs in exchange for improving the schools.

Last year, 669 Boston companies created summer jobs for 3,000 students, at an average hourly wage of $5.39. Napoleon "Eddie" Santos, 17 and a senior at Dorchester High School, got his first real job that way. This summer he was one of four full-time interns apprenticing in maintenance engineering at Beacon Co. Under a separate program, companies hired 1,000 high school graduates, 72% of them black or Hispanic, into permanent jobs. PIC also offers jobs and counseling to dropouts, and guidance to ninth graders.



JOB TRAINING

Boston's intern program is giving many poor youths their first jobs. Eddie Santos (right) is an apprentice maintenance engineer

UNFAIR BURDEN. Rebuilding a school system proved tougher. Reading and math scores rose modestly. Attendance went up. But Boston's dropout rate is stuck at 46%. "The business community has done its job. I think everyone's disappointed on the school side," declares Edward E. Phillips, chairman of insurer The New England. To do more, he says, "would be a pretty unfair burden on businesses. We pay hefty taxes to support the system already."

But some corporate leaders insist an even broader burden must be borne. Harold W. McGraw Jr., chairman emeritus of McGraw-Hill Inc., which publishes BUSINESS WEEK, heads the Business Council for Effective Literacy, aimed at millions of U.S. adults who lack functional reading skills. Owen B. Butler, retired chairman of Procter & Gamble Co. focuses on the very young: "The best way for business to invest in educating the disadvantaged is to reach them early. By age 5, they're already so deprived they can't benefit from schooling," he says. Butler lauds such efforts as Success by Six. In that program, Minneapolis employers, civic groups, and schools spent $647,000 this year on early childhood health and education through the local United Way.

A departure from corporate practice? Not for Butler. "It took us years to develop Tartar-Control Crest, years to make a profit on our investment. So we understood the economics of early childhood programs." For him, the long view on education is just good business.

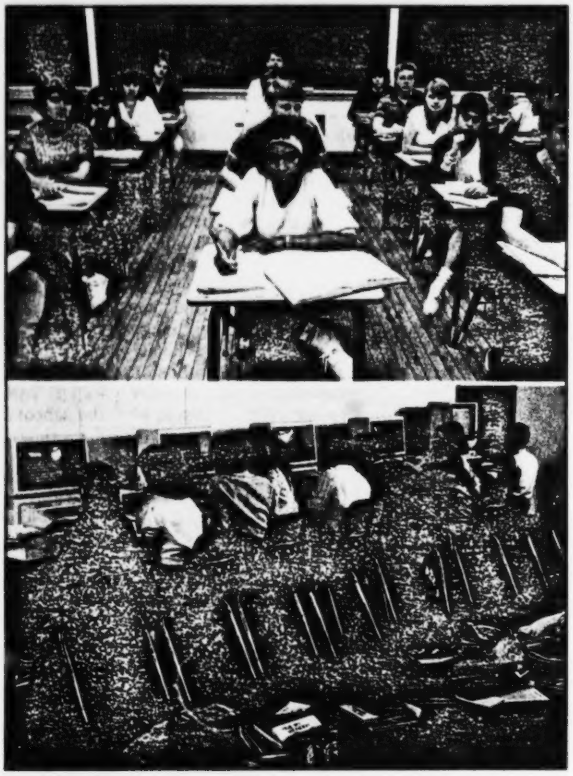
By Elizabeth Ehrlich in New York, with bureau reports ed in poor communities as role models.

Increasing pay can help recruit and retain teachers. But so far efforts in that direction have raised average starting salaries only to the $18,000 range—hardly enough to entice talented students away from other professional tracks. A few school districts, though, now pay their best or most experienced teachers several times that amount.

To attract more teachers, New Jersey is experimenting with alternatives to the standard-certification route so that college graduates in fields other than education can come aboard. Using audiovisual aids, computers, satellite teaching, team-teaching, and even switching to staggered semesters can cut down the number of teachers required as well.

Moving teachers who have been promoted into management jobs back into classrooms could be one solution to the labor shortage. School systems are notoriously bureaucratic. According to the AFT, from 1975 to 1986 school districts hired one curriculum adviser, program director, or other desk worker for every new classroom teacher. "Before we ask for additional funds, we must reorder our priorities," says Mary Hatwood Futrell, president of the National Education Association (NEA).

How to shrink staff and administrative functions isn't the only thing schools can learn from business. Incentive pay can also help. In Rochester, N. Y., last year, the teachers' union sat down with administrators to bargain for school-based decision-making and pay hikes of more than 40%. The new contract also established a career ladder with a top rung of so-called lead teachers who can earn up to $70,000 per year in the contract's third year. Top pay requires them to accept assignments in the system's toughest schools, now often in the hands of novice teachers. "They'll be the Clint Eastwoods of teaching," says union head Urbanski.



A RAGING DEBATE
Traditionalists stress the importance of a strong curriculum and high standards. Others want reforms such as peer tutoring and team learning

Reaching disadvantaged kids in tough neighborhoods also may require expanding the traditional role of schools—the only stable institutions in some kids' lives. A handful of inner-city schools are trying on-site day care for teenage mothers, after-school hours to increase learning time, and intensive anti-dropout counseling. Arkansas, New York City, California, and Minnesota have started prekindergartens for four-year-olds. "Pedagogic reforms are wasted unless you do something about social-capital building," says Primerica CEO and social activist William S. Woodside.

Northeastern University economist Andrew Sum argues that an extended school year, which the Japanese have shown benefits middle-class pupils, can do even more for poor kids who, left to home and peer influences, tend to lose ground in summer. California is moving to year-round schools to increase learning time—and to handle a shortage of classroom space.

SCHOOL VOUCHERS. Sar Levitan of George Washington University believes schools must assume even more roles to fill the gap left by working mothers. "I'm not a moralist, I'm only an economist," Levitan says. "If women are going to do society's work, the schools must respond."

One way to make the schools more responsive to the needs of the students is to force them to compete for students. Some 20 years ago economist Milton Friedman, a Nobel prizewinner, proposed issuing vouchers to families for the amount it costs to educate their kids. Parents would select among the schools, "paying" with the vouchers, so schools would have to upgrade or lose funding.

Although no school system has yet issued a Friedman voucher, there is growing support for the idea of parental choice to foster competition, accountability, and parental involvement. The National Governors' Assn. believes that choice within the public schools "can promote equity." Poor kids, claims Heritage Foundation analyst Jeanne Allen, would benefit most, since wealthier families already choose schools by moving to communities with good ones.

In the past, though, choice has sometimes been used to thwart integration. In some places, so-called magnet schools—the best schools in the district—skim off the community's best students, leaving other schools worse off. "You don't improve schools by running away from schools," bristles NEA President Futrell. Minnesota's teachers are suing their state over its new Choose-a-School plan, which lets kids enroll in any public school.

Other experiments are on the way. Boston University is taking on the reorganization of the troubled Chelsea (Mass.) school system. New Jersey has begun a hostile takeover of Jersey City schools, whose performance was close to meltdown. But much of the system still is plagued with inertia and institutional rigidity. If there is to be meaningful reform, adversaries in the education community will have to cede cherished turf and cooperate.

The alternative—bumbling along from crisis to crisis while presiding over decline—is simply not acceptable. Schools are the crucible where children do or don't become productive members of the community. For children growing into citizens—and for a society that wants to prosper—education is just too important to entrust to the status quo.

By Elizabeth Ehrlich in New York

IT'S TIME TO PUT OUR MONEY WHERE OUR FUTURE IS

Investments in education and training will yield sure-fire returns we can't afford to ignore

In the U.S., when you turn 18 or become a citizen, you may register to vote. The process varies from state to state, depending on the requirements of the local board of elections. But one thing is true across the nation: You do not need to be able to read or write. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its amendments abolished literacy tests, among other discriminatory local requirements, that had long disenfranchised millions of black and disadvantaged citizens.

Yet today the person who can vote but cannot read and write remains disenfranchised in another, more fundamental, sense. The right to earn a decent wage and make a productive contribution to society can't easily be exercised by the illiterate, the poorly educated, and the unskilled. Disenfranchised, too, is the unemployed steelworker unable to find the job to fit his unneeded skills. Then there's the single mother unable to find affordable day care for her toddler so that she can go to work.

The cold, hard, economic facts make a compelling case for action. The direct costs are clear: Incomes are lost, and unemployment and welfare benefits are paid out. But the overall loss to the economy is bigger still. America's most productive resource, its people, is not being fully utilized.

TIME BOMB. The bean-counters in Washington and state capitals around the country will say there is no money available to invest in educating and training tomorrow's work force. And some economists, such as University of Chicago professor and BUSINESS WEEK columnist Gary S. Becker, whose pioneering work measured the rate of return to investments in human capital, would prefer that market forces eliminate the mismatch between jobs and skills. But labor markets take time to work, and time is of the essence. Already the nation has suffered the consequences in the international marketplace; in the future, fiercer competition, changing demographics, and new technologies will demand that skills keep improving. Ignorance costs far more than knowledge.

In a $4 trillion economy with a $1 trillion federal budget there is surely room for some shifts in spending: away from plant and equipment and toward workers; away from the aged and toward the very young; and even away from guns and toward people. Whoever wins the Presidential election on Nov. 8 should spearhead a new national commitment to America's future by investing in its people. Whatever it takes—new money or a reallocation of resources—the commitment should come through loud and clear. The federal government, state and local governments, business, labor, and the electorate will all have to do their part. What should be done? Here are some suggestions:

- **Instill the habits of learning and working in kids at an early age.** "Early intervention" by means of preschool programs has shown proven results. Numerous studies demonstrate that the younger the child, the greater the long-run payoff of an investment in that child. Often mothers become in-

volved in these programs as well, and they help to nurture and sustain a learning ethic in their kids.

For every dollar invested in preschool programs such as the government's 23-year-old Head Start program or the Perry Preschool program in Ypsilanti, Mich., more than four times that amount is saved in public assistance, special education, and other costs. Children enrolled in such programs are much more likely to graduate from high school and be employed than children not enrolled in the programs. Some experts urge even earlier intervention, saying help should begin in the womb. Each dollar spent on prenatal care saves $3.38 in the cost of care for low birth-weight babies.

At the moment the government spends about $2.4 billion a year on the care and education of preschoolers. Compare that with a tab of $8.7 billion for one year's spending on space research and technology. Or $38 billion for a single year's worth of military research, development, and testing. Or compare it, even, with spending on the elderly. Since 1980, social programs that benefit children have suffered budget cuts in real terms, while programs benefiting the elderly have grown faster than inflation. Prenatal and preschool programs could reach most eligible participants with annual funding of anywhere from $2 billion to $10 billion, experts estimate. Increases of such magnitude, observes Isabel V. Sawhill, senior fellow at the Urban Institute in Washington, "won't exactly kill us."

■ **Pay teachers more, and perhaps transform the whole teaching process.** First there was reform, now there's restructuring. The process has begun, but more has to be done to enable the nation's schools to prepare students for life and work. This could involve "team" instruction, with highly qualified "lead" teachers, and new ways to teach thinking skills as well as the basics.

While the impetus and financing for these changes must come at the state and local level, the federal government can play an important role as a catalyst for change. The Education Dept. has a mixed record on this score. Its report, *A Nation at Risk*, shook up public school administrators and launched a reform process, but outgoing Education Secretary William J. Bennett has been impatient with results. And the Education Dept. could do more to promote demonstration projects and fund education research—efforts that would help educators improve the schools.

■ **Adopt major new incentives to train and retrain workers.** In a competitive and rapidly changing economy, old skills become outdated and new skills are needed. "Most of us, after the age of 25, change occupations three times and jobs six times," observes Pat Choate, director of TRW Inc.'s Office of Policy Analysis. How to prepare people for those changes? Spread the cost of training through new initiatives. An investment tax credit to businesses for money spent on improving worker skills is one idea. Or a tax credit could be granted to individuals for investments in training and education they make on their own. Another incentive to both employers and workers would be a tax-free individual training account, akin to the individual retirement account, which could be jointly contributed to by workers and businesses. For years, any tax break granted industry has been skewed way in favor of physical investment. These proposals would reverse that bias.

■ **Tailor the workplace to the new labor force.** To retain female workers who have many years' experience, and to enable those workers to be more productive, companies should extend child-care benefits to a far greater extent than they have to date. To keep older workers productive, employers should offer new duties and more flexible hours. And granting workers portable benefits could make them more mobile, and thus more responsive to the fast-changing labor demands of employers.

Too frequently, managers have looked at workers as a cost rather than a resource. And every extra dollar spent on workers was viewed as that much more of a burden, whereas it could be, if wisely spent, a means to empower workers to do better. Hundreds of companies now recognize this to be true with respect to training. Investments in training yield tangible rewards, and accordingly business spends approximately $30 billion a year on training. The rewards of changing the workplace are also large. But a massive cultural adjustment may be necessary to realize them.

There's no doubt that government is in a belt-tightening mood, and business is eager to keep costs under control. But without strong leadership and new spending priorities, America's most precious resource will be neglected. In the words of a familiar advertisement: A mind is a terrible thing to waste.

By Karen Pennar in New York

HUMAN CAPITAL

[illegible] Work Force

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The Literacy Hoax

The fight against illiteracy is fought on many fronts. It goes beyond teaching Johnny to read.

By David Montgomery

Whatever you've gathered about America's so-called Literacy Problem, forget it.

Proficient readers have been treating themselves to titillating glimpses of the reading scandal ever since it was exposed a few years back in newspapers and on television. George Bush surgically implanted it in his stump speech. Famous Amos, the cookie chef, used it to sell baked goods.

The stories go like this: Johnny, 25, can't read the label on the bottle of poison. Mary, 40, fixes airplane engines without a clear understanding of the fine print in the safety manual. Kenneth, 53, carries a newspaper under his arm to camouflage his problem.

It's sad. It's shocking. It's an evil scourge that will rob billions of dollars from the economy that is run by proficient readers.

Also, it's something of a hoax. Those sob stories support the myth that a grab bag of ills could be cured if only we would teach Johnny and other non-reading adults how to read. When we invented the Literacy Problem, we implied that the issue merely involved questions of reading and not reading. That isn't true. Reading instruction alone isn't even close to rooting out illiteracy.

Buffalo's illiterati came by their non-readership honestly. It was bequeathed to them, thrust upon them, sometimes earned by them through their own miscalculations. Illiteracy is an effect, not a cause. Later on, it multiplies, divides and conquers.

Alicia Bray, 19, never had much use for teachers. But she could teach them a thing or two. She is an intelligent and determined young woman working her way through a basic education program outside the school system that will lead to her first full-time job.

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DAVID MONTGOMERY is a News staff writer. This is his first story for BUFFALO.

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Today's lesson from Alicia is how to spend roughly 11 years, nine months, two weeks and several fine spring days in Buffalo's public school system and then emerge illiterate. This won't take long. It's an easy lesson. You can leave early and go calculate your 1987 school tax bill.

Say you're in an English class or a social studies class at Grover Cleveland High School, Alicia's alma mater. The teacher might let students go to the gym when they finished their work, explains Alicia. She would pretend to be done, copy a friend's paper and trot off to the gym. Or she would say she was suddenly sick when English period arrived. Or she would just cut class altogether.

Teachers aren't fools. After weeks, months, maybe even entire grade levels of this, the teachers would catch on. They would call Alicia's home for a parent conference. That's when the scam would kick in.

Alicia's older sister, Sharon, would answer the phone, pretending to be Mrs. Bray, and schedule the conference. As the day of the conference neared, Sharon would call the school, posing as an indisposed Mrs. Bray, and say she was sending her elder daughter to attend the meeting in her place.

Is this sinking in?

On conference day, the school authorities would outline Alicia's record for the phony parental emissary, and Alicia's sister would nod. Then Alicia would be hauled into the room, and she would promise to improve. Mrs. Bray would be none the wiser.

"My mother never did know," Alicia recalls.

After her junior year at Grover Cleveland last spring, after more than a decade of public schooling, Alicia quit school and entered the Allentown Youth Work Skills Program run by the Allentown Community Center, where she was tested as reading at between a fourth- and fifth-grade level.

That's it. End of lesson. Add one more promising young mind to Erie County's population of 151,000 adults who are functionally illiterate — reading below a ninth-grade level. Across the country, between 20 and 30 percent of American adults are believed to be functionally illiterate.

Who's to blame?

The school system that passed Alicia from grade to grade and was a sucker for school-kid dodges? Partly. Alicia's family, who apparently didn't monitor her school performance closely enough? Some. Alicia, for being smart but not scholarly? Yeah, her too.

There are other good reasons why in Buffalo as many eligible voters as re-elected Jimmy Griffin mayor probably

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can't decipher every word in this paragraph, why in the richest nation on earth 60 million adults read at no better than an eighth-grade level.

People can fail to learn to read because they are poor, neglected, battered, abused, hungry, shut out, drug-stuffed, dulled by the illiterate households they were born into or cut off from the opportunities this city is supposed to offer. Some don't learn to read because the schools fail. Some don't learn to read because they are mentally handicapped. A few are juvenile delinquents.

To say the problem is illiteracy and the solution is teaching people how to read is like plucking the head of a dandelion in a garden and ignoring the taproot. We fooled ourselves when we dubbed this the Literacy Crisis, the Reading Scandal. These are nothing more than neat, deceptive, literate labels for something else that is deeply wrong.

A big surprise for Buffalo's public education bashers is that, on some levels, Buffalo does have ways to fight illiteracy. They're not bad. Yet the education system is still churning out functionally illiterate students like a factory.

"Sometimes we oversell an idea," says Dr. Everett S. Williams, assistant superintendent for continuing education with the Buffalo Public Schools and director of the Adult Learning Center on Elmwood Avenue. "We present it in such a way that people get to believing if they can learn how to read, all their problems will be solved. If a poor person learns to read, he will not become rich overnight."

Williams remembers a student whose urine-soaked clothing was so offensive it forced his classmates to leave the room. Williams returned the next day with two bags of his own clothes for the young man. Last month a woman was sent home after she arrived at the center with head lice. Her lessons will resume when the condition clears and she brings a note from her doctor.

"Reading is a tool," Williams says. "It's not a panacea."

Alicia just wants a job. Eventually she plans to become a nurse.

"When I first came here, I started at a fourth-grade level," Alicia says one day during a break at the Allentown center on Franklin Street. "I didn't even know I was reading at a fourth-grade level. I felt like I was stupid. I felt real low and everything. I'm doing better every time I take the test."

After just 10 weeks Alicia progressed to nearly a sixth-grade reading level. Students advance quickly during the early stages of the program as they uncover skills that got buried in high school, according to Alicia's instructor, Cynthia Barry. Alicia did so well that Barry allowed her to skip one workbook in her individualized reading program.

Sophie Bray, Alicia's mother, sits in her living room on Best Street and spreads the blame for her daughter's acklus-

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ter public school career on both the teachers and Alicia's personal attitude toward school.

"Teachers don't take the time to learn kids," she says. "They don't care."

Alicia herself started elementary school behind schedule, at about age 7, because of an illness, and she failed seventh grade. In high school, she felt old and missed her own age group, she told her family.

Mrs. Bray and her husband raised five daughters and three sons. One of Alicia's brothers recently left Grover Cleveland before graduating, just like his sister. Alicia's sister Robin left McKinley High School early to get married. Robin entered the Allentown program, earned her high school equivalency diploma and now is studying to be a legal secretary at Bryant & Stratton Business Institute.

"Sometimes kids don't want to go to school," Mrs. Bray says. "They want to have money and get a job. Allentown gives a kid hope."

John Davis, the principal of Grover Cleveland, says he counts Alicia among those kids his teachers are virtually powerless to help because of layers of past educational failures. He also admits he's been duped more than once by kids who send surrogates to cover for them in parental meetings.

To identify the predicament of those kids as simply a literacy problem is almost laughable in the trenches at Grover Cleveland.

"We have youngsters who come here through seven and eight grades, and they've never passed a subject," Davis says. "We work with them, but chances are we aren't going to be able to move them up significantly."

Davis believes problem learners must be assisted long before they reach high school. He sees hope in programs like one in Syracuse where students who reach high school without basic skills are detoured to a remedial school. When their reading and math competencies are up to par, they rejoin their classmates in a traditional high school.

"By the time you get to high school it's the end of the ball game," Davis says. "There's very little we can do if their reading, writing or math skills are below level."

It seems a high-school education is best-suited for kids with good track records. It wasn't supposed to be that way.

Kathie Kiska, chairman of Grover Cleveland's English department, taught Alicia's junior level English class a year ago. Kiska was the last in a long line of teachers who failed to help Alicia achieve her birthright, the ability to use written words effectively.

"Any student who has a real problem and wants help will get it," Kiska says. "What more can you do? You can't just lasso them and make them read."

Something's wrong. The parents say the schools don't care about their kids. The kids say school has nothing relevant to offer them. The schools say that by the time the low reading but naturally intelligent kids reach high school, they are almost unteachable.

The victims of this cross fire of blame and resignation occasionally wind up under the guidance of Kenneth H. Cowdery, executive director of the Allentown Community Center, which administers Alicia's program.

"The basic skill levels of kids dropping out of high school are getting worse and worse," Cowdery says. Ten years ago, 5 percent of the youths entering the program were illiterate. Today Cowdery estimates 20 percent of the 450 out-of-school young adults in the program started out semiliterate at best.

Allentown's basic education courses, supported by the Buffalo and Erie County Private Industry Council, prepare young people for jobs or for the high school equivalency test. An important ingredient is that beyond academics, the programs attempt to teach more general skills for coping with life. Allentown pays its pupils $2 per hour for attending.

"I don't believe the young people believe they can get a good job," Cowdery says. "Their parents may be on welfare, unemployment. Some of their friends are. All they see are people working at McDonald's, Burger King. Why try if there's not a lot of hope to go out and get a good job? I don't think that's true. But they just don't believe it. They're almost defeated before they get into the labor market."

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Indeed, why learn how to read?

Eugene T. Reville, superintendent of the Buffalo Public Schools, says the key to breaking the cycle of illiteracy is for schools and parents to start teaching children at the earliest age. Programs with that aim in mind are among the ones Buffalo school officials point to most proudly. Buffalo has the highest proportion of prekindergarten programs in the state, yet the waiting list still contains several hundred names.

"Often those youngsters we don't get to are the ones who need it the most," Reville says.

Those youngsters show up later. Last year 12 percent of Buffalo's non-handicapped eighth-graders who took a state reading test scored below the state's reference point for reading competency. The same year 13 percent of the city's older students who took the state's high-school reading competency test failed. That record of reading trouble in the Buffalo schools still was better than the scores in comparable large cities across the state.

Taking a cue from Reville, if we could just acquaint little Johnny with letters and words, maybe then we would avoid all those complicated problems later on that make literacy such an octopus. The issue in early childhood would be clear and manageable: Teach a kid to read.

Bounce that thought off Goldie Williams, principal of School 90. School 90 is an early childhood center located off Fillmore Avenue near Genesee Street, enrolling 770 children age 3 years 9 months to 9 years.

Williams tells the story of the three kids who stopped coming to school on snowy days last winter. She called their mother, who was raising 12 more school-age children.

The mother said she didn't have boots and warm clothes to adequately dress the three kids. Williams called Mozella Richardson, a school board member, at the Community Action Organization. It rounded up clothes and boots for the family. The children haven't posed a truancy problem since, according to Williams.

Some young mothers drop off their children at School 90 and then go to high school themselves.

"Teaching people to read and count — it's a bit more than that," Williams says.

One taproot that yields educational failure is a family background that doesn't support what's happening in school. Richard Coleman, 23, is a high-school dropout now trying to impress on his two children the importance of going to school.

But family support doesn't always work. Coleman's own father, Ronald,

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tried to inspire his son academically. The former foreman at the Chevrolet plant on River Road "always said 'get your education,'" Richard remembers. The elder Coleman even set an example by taking training courses at Chevy. But Richard dropped out of Lafayette High School after his sophomore year.

"Me and my girlfriend would always hang together, having a good time," Coleman says. "I started skipping class, just because I didn't like the school and the teachers."

He remembers one teacher who used to poke fun at failing students.

Today Coleman's girlfriend is his wife, and they have two daughters, ages 3 and 6. Not long ago Coleman enrolled in the Adult Learning Center and was tested as reading at between the seventh- and eighth-grade levels. Now he's almost ready to take the high-school equivalency test, after which he plans to train in electronics or computers.

What changed his mind about school and sent him to the Adult Learning Center? Family.

His younger brother Raymond has a good job repairing computers. Coleman likes his brother's example. "He's got two cars on the road and is doing great for himself," Coleman says. "My brother was more quieter than me. He had his mind on getting through high school, which is what I should have done."

Coleman is confident he can use his own example to show his daughters the importance of not following in his footsteps, of getting their high-school diplomas. "If they want to go to college, that's up to them," he says.

The Adult Learning Center, supported by the Board of Education and government funding, is the largest adult literacy program in the state outside New York City. Designed for people no longer in the public schools, the center last year enrolled 2,600 students at 19 locations around the city. Almost 300 of the students were dropouts age 18 to 20, and the rest were older city residents. Almost 90 percent of the students entered the program reading at the eighth-grade level or below, according to Jerome M. Yavno, project administrator for adult basic education.

Even with 2,600 students, the learning center has room for more. The supply of literacy training available is greater than the demand for it, Yavno says. Directors of other programs in the city report the same surplus of assistance. Tens of thousands of functionally illiterate residents of Erie County aren't seeking help, even though the tuition is free.

The Literacy Problem has been misrepresented in another sense. Contrary to popular impression, there are fewer non-reading Americans today than there were 100 years ago and probably fewer than there were 30 years ago, according to Jonathan Kozol, author of a 1985 book on the subject, "Illiterate America." Today the public schools are better run, the teaching of reading is more skillful, and the safety nets to catch failures are open wider.

But while there are fewer non-reading Americans, not knowing how to read is more paralyzing today than it was 30 years ago. And illiteracy is more obtrusive. The computer has acted like a "magnifying glass" on the population of marginal readers, says Everett Williams, Adult Learning Center director. Those well-paying blue-collar jobs that low-readers might have taken in the past are disappearing along with the old manufac-

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turing industries that created them. And the level of literacy required to survive in new sorts of jobs is rising every year. The number of adults who don't know how to read at all is probably declining, but the number of adults who can't read well enough to get by is likely to grow, perhaps rapidly, according to Kozol. An AFL-CIO education official estimated a few years ago that "by the 1990s, anyone who doesn't have at least a 12th-grade reading, writing and calculating level will be absolutely lost."

Understanding what the Literacy Problem really is becomes more crucial as literacy counts for more and more in a postindustrial society.

Ronald J. Winter, 23, holds down a promising part-time job restoring antique furniture and doing general maintenance at the Amherst Museum. For five years he has worked there without knowing how to read well. He has just finished restoring a 100-year-old jeweler's work desk and a 90-year-old writing desk.

But Winter recently discovered that even though he was working with his hands restoring antiques, he could not advance in his job and get full-time hours without developing better reading skills. He must be able to catalog the pieces he is refurbishing for the museum's records.

So he entered Literacy Volunteers of Buffalo & Erie County, a program that annually provides individual tutors to about 625 low-readers in the Buffalo area.

"I'm picking up more now than I did in school," Winter says. "I know I got to have it, so I'm trying. Back in high school, it was probably the case that I really didn't care."

Unlike Allentown and the Adult Learning Center, which hire instructors, Literacy Volunteers recruits unpaid tutors who take training courses on how to teach reading. Carolyn Gromer, chairwoman of Literacy Volunteers, says when well-meaning proficient readers call about becoming tutors, she tries to make the callers understand just what they are getting into.

"You're not going to be teaching 'The Wind in the Willows,' because that's not where it's at," she says of the fable that ranks with "The Wizard of Oz" and "Alice in Wonderland" as a children's classic.

The Literacy Problem is much deeper, much darker than anything a well-scrubbed youngster sitting on someone's knee in a fire-lighted living room will encounter in a storybook.

It is teaching the vowel sounds to a child only on the days he has the proper clothes to keep him warm on his walk to school.

During a recent interview, an upper-level Buffalo school official went off the record in order to tick off a list of ugly factors that he said contributed to illiteracy in the city: broken homes, teen-age pregnancy, crime, neglect — those that cut across economic lines — and then poverty itself. On the record he talked about programs like EPIC, AIM, STAR and Project SMART — catchy names for programs designed to solve the Literacy Problem.

When the problem is called literacy, it is elegant, not ugly. No one is afraid to be quoted on it. It is even fashionable these days, after all the tales in the press. You can raise the Literacy Problem in conversation without offending anybody. It mixes well at cocktail parties either before or after comments on the latest difficult foreign film.

The underlying factors are dirtier, drearier — and have been around a long time. Anyone might feel guilty that they haven't been solved yet.

"These people don't have a lot of political clout to be able to influence how our resources are spent," Gromer says. "Everybody wants to forget about the teen-age mother. What kind of political importance does she have?"

And how romantic is helping a teen-age mother pay for day care and rent when you could be teaching Johnny to love Shakespeare? If a program like Literacy Volunteers turned its attention to assisting young mothers, "we wouldn't attract very many recruits," Gromer says.

Reading programs are essential. But it's a good bet all the chairs won't be filled until we're frank about facing the problem in all its ugly aspects. Reading teachers and the directors of reading programs in Buffalo seem to agree on that.

But when the rest of us talk, sometimes it sounds more like we're reciting from a storybook. ■

THE EDUCATION CRISIS: WHAT BUSINESS CAN DO

Now that they have restructured their own companies, some executives want to restructure the public schools. Here's how they're going about it. ■ *by Nancy J. Perry*

AS A MAJOR contributor of tax dollars to public education, corporate America is getting a lousy return on its investment. Not only are schools today not preparing kids for jobs, they aren't even teaching them to read and write. In the U.S., 30% of all high school students—one million teenagers each year—drop out before graduating. Most are virtually unemployable. Of those who do graduate, many do not have the problem-solving skills to function in an increasingly complex information society.

All this has the business world worried—and ready, finally, to take action. Threatened with a severe shortage of talent, corporate America is becoming a powerful new supporter of reform in the public schools. Says Apple Computer Chairman John Sculley, who ranks education—along with drugs and the economy—as one of the top three issues on the national agenda: "Education is in crisis, but there are a lot of people ready to do something about it."

Consider, for example, what recently happened in New Orleans. In early April a group of prominent businessmen gathered for lunch with Owen "Brad" Butler, retired chairman of Procter & Gamble. Butler wasn't in town to talk shop. In nine days residents of New Orleans were to vote on a tax levy to raise more money for the city's decrepit, overcrowded schools.

Two years ago they voted down a similar proposal 2 to 1, a defeat that propelled local businessmen, concerned about the city's economic future, into forward motion. Working with the school superintendent, the business leaders drew up a new proposal. They got a sudden-death assist from Butler, a leading member of the Committee for Economic Development, a research and education organization of 225 top businessmen and university presidents. He came to New Orleans to talk up the levy on television and with citizens' groups. Butler and his fellow businessmen were persuasive. In mid-April, New Orleans voters approved a $20.5-million-a-year property tax increase to pay for new textbooks, higher teachers' salaries, and preschool programs for low-income youngsters.

Score one for business. Score one for the public schools. And in this battle of minds that everyone wins, score one for the citizenry. Until recently companies viewed schools as dull sport and none of their business. But times have changed. In a Conference Board survey of 260 major companies, banks, and utilities, two-thirds listed primary and secondary education as their No. 1 community concern—above local economic development, arts and culture, and higher education. Less than 10% of the money corporations voluntarily contribute to education goes to elementary and secondary schools. But the percentage is slowly rising, and companies are spending smarter. Instead of promising trips to Dodger Stadium to seniors with good attendance, they are working at national, state, and local levels to help change the entire system. Having restructured their own businesses, they now want to restructure the schools.

Innovations abound. In Pittsburgh, Westinghouse Electric, Dravo Corp., PPG Industries, and other companies support the Allegheny Conference Education Fund, which awards grants to teachers and principals who develop imaginative teaching methods. Two teachers, for example, created a course combining art and geometry that is now part of their high school's curriculum. The involvement of business is one reason more than 3,000 students in four years have moved from private and parochial schools back into the Pittsburgh public schools.

Corporations spend $10 billion a year on management training. Convinced that this is an area in which school districts dramatically underinvest, Cigna, Sun, Arco, SmithKline Beckman, and Rohm & Haas invite Philadelphia principals to participate in seminars where they learn how to delegate, negotiate, and communicate. "It was interesting to be involved with bottom-line people," says one newly executized educator. "Here, kids are our bottom line."

General Electric helps an oft-overlooked group: talented, motivated students who frequently get ignored as frazzled teachers deal with a class full of Johnny Rottens. GE spends $50,000 a year working with top

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students at the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics, a new public school in New York's Spanish Harlem. The company provides mentors and special classes to help its GE Scholars get into prestigious universities. The center is a big success in its own right. Located in the old Benjamin Franklin High School—which was closed in 1982 after only 30 students in a class of 1,000 graduated—it prepares mostly minority students for careers in engineering and science. In two years, 95% of the seniors have received diplomas.

Industry is also creating technologies to help kids learn. Schools have been unusually successful teaching literary skills to children in kindergarten and first grade with a software program sold by IBM called Writing to Read. Youngsters are first told to write words the way they sound—"enuf," say, or "clowd." Later they read books that pair the words with their correct spellings. "You can put the program in the worst schools and go back a year later, and it's almost like a religious experience," says Ken Lay, director of marketing for IBM's educational systems. "The kids come up and ask if they can read a story to you. They do better in every way than their peers who don't have the program. We thought it was because they could read better. But a principal told us, 'You're crazy. It's because now they have self-esteem.' "

REPORTER ASSOCIATE *Alan Deutschman*

Most of these children have seen nothing but failure in their short lives. What turns them around, Lay says, is realizing that they can succeed. The school superintendent in Pekin, Illinois, says that in just two years, Writing to Read has reduced the percentage of first-graders needing remedial help from 11% to 2%.

THE PILGRIMAGE from boardroom to classroom has been fired by devotion to that sacred corporate deity: self-interest. The Hudson Institute predicts that the majority of new jobs over the next 15 years will require some form of education beyond high school. At the same time the number of young workers entering the labor force will decline by 10%. To fill job openings, industry will have to dip into the pool of traditionally less skilled and underutilized population groups—minorities and immigrants. "The hidden time bomb," says Apple's Sculley, "is that in the 21st century we won't be able to maintain an affluent middle-class lifestyle. We can't keep flipping hamburgers and making fried chicken for the rest of the world. We need skills for an information economy."

Today minority students are the majority in the country's 45 largest cities: nearly 700,000 of the 940,000 public school students in New York City are black or Hispanic. By the year 2000, the Committee for Economic Development reports, 38% of U.S. children under 18 will be minorities. Their legacy is largely one of failure. According to the Census Bureau, 35% of blacks and 45% of Hispanics drop out of high school. Numerous reports say that 40% of the minority population is barely literate.

Companies are already paying a high price. One-third of the hourly workers at Polaroid have taken classes in reading, writing, and problem-solving since 1985. Motorola, which has traditionally employed eight of ten applicants for entry-level positions, today screens as many as 15 to hire just one—and it is looking for only seventh-grade English skills and ninth-grade math skills. William Wiggenhorn, Motorola's director of training, has calculated that it costs $200 to train a U.S. worker in statistical process control, a basic manufacturing technique. Teaching the same process to a Japanese worker, he says, costs 47 cents. The Japanese simply hand their employees a book. American workers must first learn to read.

The U.S. brain drain has been a long time building. Some business leaders have been trying to stop it at least since 1983, when a national commission decried a "rising tide of mediocrity" in the schools in its highly publicized report, *A Nation at Risk*. The good news is that these early efforts brought executives and educators together. The bad news is that many of them failed.

Too often, attempts by business to help

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Now that they have restructured their own companies, some executives want to restructure the

turned out to be little more than feel-good programs: companies giving uniforms to the band or executives putting their arms around poor kids for a snapshot in the corporate newsletter. The increasingly popular "adopt a school" idea, in which a company lends ongoing assistance to a particular school, was derided by educators as patronizing and superficial. Snorts a Philadelphia teacher in an adopted school: "All we got was a slurpee machine."

The experience of American Express at Brooklyn's Prospect Heights High School is an example of good intentions gone awry. Three years ago American Express began a work/study program to keep students from dropping out. The company dangled an enticing carrot: part-time jobs at its subsidiary Shearson Lehman and the promise of permanent employment for those who graduated. Then last February, with no warning to Prospect Heights, American Express ended the program. "I felt so sorry for the kids," says Diana Walker, a school counselor. "I think some of them felt like, 'Hey, I've been kicked in the butt again.' "

Dee Topol, vice president of the American Express Foundation, says the program, budgeted at $97,000 a year, was not cost-effective: "You wouldn't believe the problems: alcohol, drugs, parental abuse." After three years, only four students are still working at Shearson (see box, page 80). Walker says the company knew it was hiring youngsters with special problems, but failed to prepare its supervisors. Both sides do agree on one thing: The kids got a raw deal.

KNOCKED ABOUT by false starts, political squabbles, and foggy goals, corporate executives have recently begun a second stage of reform: deep-rooted, radical change. Says Marsha Levine of the American Federation of Teachers, who co-edited a new book, *American Business and the Public School*: "Companies should ask, 'Does this change the way things are done, or add on to an existing structure that isn't working very well?' The focus should be on change."

But how to change? Throwing money "willy-nilly" at the problem, as Education Secretary William Bennett puts it, is not the answer. Says he: "More generosity should come with strings attached." On the national level, business can supply direction and leadership. On the state level, it can promote new legislation, such as lengthening the school day and year. On the local level, companies can let schools know exactly what skills they are looking for in new employees. Nothing would make the kids happier. Says a senior at Strawberry Mansion High School in Philadelphia: "We need more businessmen to come to school and say, 'If you do this and that, we'll give you a job later on.' "

The most provocative educational research done by business on a national scale has been by Brad Butler's group, the Committee for Economic Development. In the early 1980s, as members traced the fault lines in public schools, something caught their attention: an ongoing study of preschool students begun 26 years ago in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Created to test the impact of preschool on later success, the Perry Preschool Program grew out of the frustration of a school psychologist, David Weikart. Teachers kept sending problem adolescents to Weikart with the orders, "Fix 'em up." Most were from poor homes. And unfortunately, Weikart found, "I couldn't fix 'em up." Concluding that the problems must start early, he began to follow the progress of low-income 3- and 4-year-olds who had attended preschool against that of a control group who did not. The startling results: Just one year of quality preschool before kindergarten cuts the likelihood a child will drop out by about one-third (see chart).

LAST SEPTEMBER, the CED published its revelatory report, *Children in Need*. It cites statistics showing that more than 25% of children under age 6 now live in poverty and says that poor students are three times more likely to drop out than students from more affluent homes. "These kids start out behind and they continue to lose ground," says Butler. Just $1 spent on early prevention and intervention, says the CED, can save $6 in costs of remedial education, welfare, and crime down the road. The CED's conclusion: To save the kids most at risk of failing, it is vital to reach them in their earliest years and even, in some cases, before they are born (see box, page 76).

continued

THE EDUCATION CRISIS: WHAT BUSINESS CAN DO

HOW ONE MAN MAKES A DIFFERENCE

■ In the fall of 1993, an unusual group of youngsters will enter kindergarten at Beethoven Elementary School on Chicago's South Side. They will come, as most South Side kids do, from wretched urban poverty: The Beethoven school serves children from six of the 28 tenements of the Robert Taylor Homes, the country's largest public housing project. They will have spent their formative years in an environment heavy with hunger, drug addiction, and violence. Yet if a startling experiment known as the Beethoven project is successful, these progeny of the hard-core underclass will start school as well developed and ready to learn as Dick and Jane.

The Beethoven project—formally called the Center for Successful Childhood Development—was inspired by Irving Harris, a Chicago philanthropist who has spent $1 million on the experiment. (Harris, 77, made his fortune developing home-permanent products for Toni Co. and now runs Standard Shares, a holding company.) His idea is intriguing: He wants to identify all the approximately 125 children who will enter Beethoven Elementary in 1993—some of whom have not even been born yet—and provide them and their mothers with special services over the next five years. Mothers will receive prenatal care, counseling, and classes in parenting. Children will get pediatric care and be enrolled in preschool.

To find participants, nine family advocates from the community roam the dingy corridors, knocking on doors. Women who are pregnant or who have recently delivered babies—120 as of May—are asked to join. The typical mother is black, single, and 20 years old, and has at least two other children.

Gaining the trust of the Robert Taylor residents has not been easy. To show its commitment, the center's 43-member staff—mostly social workers—took over the second floor of one of the housing project's 16-story buildings. Gang wars and frequent gunfire did not deter them from moving in last fall; faulty plumbing almost did. "There were no toilets. The place was bombed out," says Harris. "By herculean effort we got it renovated." The center quickly became a haven for parents and children. One couple, concerned that their toddler was not toddling, brought the child in to see a specialist, who pinpointed the reason: The parents carried their baby everywhere because the floor of their apartment was covered with rat poison.

Among those closely tracking the progress of Beethoven's kindergarten class of 1993 will be Senator Edward Kennedy, a longtime Harris pal. Kennedy sponsored the Comprehensive Child Development Centers Act, which was signed into law in April. The legislation authorizes funding for programs modeled after the Beethoven project in up to 25 other cities.

The Beethoven experiment is aimed at the poorest of the poor, a group that comprises only about 2% of the population. Is it worth spending so much time and money on such a small number of people? "If we don't do something with these five million people," says Harris, "they will grow to ten million. Can we afford not to do it?"

Solid evidence that preschool works has led many business leaders to ask why the federal government spends so little money—$1 billion a year—on Head Start, a preschool program for low-income youngsters. Says Xerox Chairman David Kearns: "It is one program we know is effective, and we still don't fully fund it. This is an outrageous misallocation of funds." The CED estimates it would cost around $3 billion to reach all of the 730,000 4-year-olds in the U.S. who can be considered "at risk." Because of the money shortage, less than 20% of children poor enough to qualify attended Head Start programs in 1987.

A FEW STATES are trying to make up the shortfall, sometimes under prodding from prominent businessmen. In Texas, H. Ross Perot pushed through an education reform package in 1984 that required all school districts with 15 or more preschoolers from low-income or non-English-speaking families to provide programs for them. At Ysleta Pre-Kinder in El Paso, 720 4-year-olds play on computers and check out books from a well-stocked library. The initial batch of kids who attended Ysleta has just completed first grade. Teachers at Edgemere Elementary School say the children all performed as well as or better than their middle-class peers.

Most states claim they can't afford preschool programs. Says Anne Mitchell of New York's Bank Street College: "The public school system doesn't have the capacity to absorb all 4-year-olds. Building new schools is a big investment." The real problem seems to be that preschool is not yet a top priority at either the federal or the state level. Ed Rigaud, a middle manager at Procter & Gamble, got a typical response when he asked an Ohio legislator to support preschool programs. Said the legislator: "We can't invest in preschool. We have three more prisons to build." Michigan this year will spend $2 million on preschool programs—and nearly $1 billion over five years on 15,000 new prison cells.

Because of Head Start's demonstrable success, educational reformers are convinced the federal government should spend more on the program. But when it comes to restructuring grades K-12, these same crusaders would leave change up to the states. It's one thing for the federal government to provide money to get 4-year-olds into preschool classes. It's quite another to dictate educational programs

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and policies for 16,000 independent school districts and 83,000 public schools. "There's no way to do this at the national level," says Perot. "You've got to do it 50 times over."

IT WON'T BE EASY. Warns former Tennessee governor Lamar Alexander: "All the agents of the status quo will be on your doorstep, you can be sure." Chief among them will be the teachers' unions, particularly the National Education Association, which includes 75% of all teachers. The NEA has adamantly opposed moving to a performance-based system that would include merit pay and teacher testing. "So when governors say, 'Let's pay our best teachers more,' " says Alexander, "businessmen should support those of us who are getting our knees cut off leading the charge."

He knows of what he speaks. In 1984, Tennessee business leaders backed Alexander's plan for a 1-cent sales tax increase to pay for a Better Schools Program, and then contributed $500,000 to help him win a bitter year-long battle against the state's largest teachers' union. What was the union opposing? A career ladder that would promote outstanding performers to Master Teacher and pay them more to take on added responsibilities.

It was the career ladder that helped superintendent Mayfield Brown make a difference in rural Clay County, Tennessee. Per capita adult income is $6,600 in Clay County, and the illiteracy rate is 38%. Like most rural areas, it cannot depend on local industry to contribute much to special programs in the schools. But business-backed state reforms gave Brown the money to pay his best teachers to provide remedial reading during the summer to first- and second-graders. Clay County has since moved from 14th place to third place among neighboring counties on standardized tests. "It all boils down to reading," says Brown. "If you teach a child to read, his education continues until the day he dies."

Enacting educational reform is only half the battle. Once passed, reforms often have all the staying power of a Third World government. In 1985 legislators in Illinois happily passed a bill calling for more preschool and dropout-prevention programs. There was only one problem. "We didn't stop to ask, 'Where are we going to get the money?' " says Robert Beckwith, director of education at the Illinois Chamber of Commerce. "It was a pie-in-the-sky dream."

In South Carolina, executives and educators combined to make the dream a reality. "They are the Oscar winners for the best-conceived state education reform," says Michael Kirst, a professor of education at Stanford. At the request of Governor Richard Riley, more than 30 business leaders joined with educators to write South Carolina's 1984 Education Improvement Act. Funded by a 1-cent sales tax increase, it included 61 new programs and policies. Among them: higher teachers' salaries, remedial education, management training for principals, and bonus dollars for schools that perform well.

SOUTH CAROLINA businessmen vigorously supported the legislation. Their chief lobbyist, real estate developer Robert Selman, spent every day for six months at the state capitol; the directors of the business he runs, the Keenan Co., had given him their blessing to devote 40% of his time to the project. "There is no question that it was frustrating," says Selman. "There are 46 senators and 124 representatives in the general assembly. You're talking about going one on one with each, and they all represent a different constituency."

To monitor the progress of the reforms, a division of public accountability was created within the department of education. The committees that wrote the bill also publish a report each year so that South Carolin-

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ians can see how their money is spent. The latest report shows that since 1984, SAT scores have risen 34 points, the largest gain in the nation. Yet the dropout rate has declined only slightly. Robert Thompson Jr., a vice president at Springs Industries, which makes textiles, believes that's because the benefits of preschool programs haven't been felt yet. "The biggest challenge here is to have the patience to wait for change," says Thompson, who is on a committee to plan the next phase of South Carolina's reforms. "You have to be able to bite your knuckles and not scream when you spend that money up front. We're talking about a generation or two before we start producing the quality we want."

For business people who live and die by quarterly reports, a generation is a long time. Working locally to provide students with tutors, computers, and jobs can yield more immediate gratification. But helping out demands visiting the schools to see what the problems are. The experience can be a shock. Says Time Inc. Chairman J. Richard Munro: "Businessmen want to get involved and then they say, 'Oh my God.' They see that the schools are a huge socioeconomic quagmire. They say, 'I've got to run my railroad. Let someone else do it.' "

Philadelphia businessmen have learned that getting involved can pay off. The Philadelphia High School Academies program is an 18-year-old venture created for low-income students that combines academic and vocational education with on-the-job experience. Executives from 40 companies, including Continental Bank, Philadelphia Electric, and Rohm & Haas, meet with teachers to help plan courses suited to employer needs. "This way, both sides know what to expect," says Curtis Mathews, manager of corporate staffing at Rohm & Haas, who regularly hires kids from the academies. "We were tired of guessing."

The chink in many of the jobs-for-grads programs is that they save the saved: Companies tend to hire kids who would have

MY FRIENDS ARE KILLING EACH OTHER. I ACCEPT IT.

Joseph Cuthbert, 20, is a typical inner-city kid. He grew up with two sisters and a brother in a tough section of Brooklyn, where he was raised by his mother, a nurse's aide. He never knew his father. At age 15 he was sent to jail for armed robbery. After serving one year, he entered Brooklyn's Prospect Heights High School and became involved in a work/study program sponsored by American Express. When Joe graduated in 1986, he began working full time as a computer operator at Shearson Lehman; he plans to go to college in the fall. Here he talks about his struggle to stay in school in a culture where cash and crack talk louder than the three R's.

All my problems started in ninth grade. You're feeling your oats then. You want respect. But once you get on the wrong track, it's like a speeding train with no brakes. Where I live, you grow up fast. Education, that's what everybody says you need to get out. Then you see this guy flaunting money, and you've got a little brother and sister who see this guy. Drugs run America, believe me. I see guys 14 and 15 riding around in big cars. My friends are killing each other. I accept it as a way of life.

You have to let ninth-graders see that this isn't all there is. When I went to school, I never used to think I would work in a company like this. To me, it was impossible. Everybody's working at places like McDonald's. Your world is isolated; you're cut off. We need more role models to make the world seem more accessible. We need more field trips. In school there is no hands-on. You never see things unless they're in a book. I was learning, but I didn't feel like I was learning for the outside. I learned about Christopher Columbus. Where's that going to get me? I'm not going to be an explorer or an archaeologist. Don't focus on that alone. Focus on the real story: me. I don't want to keep hearing about Martin Luther King and all those other people. I'm the one living. Nobody's going to put money in my pocket.

Mentors help. They can say, "What do you want to do? Let's figure out a way to get you into that." That inspires you to finish school. Your parents make it sound so easy. These days it's hard.

We need computer classes. We need businessmen coming and talking to us. We need to know there's an opportunity to start somewhere. That's what I wanted: a start. And that's what I got here. But it's hard. Some of my friends said, "Come on, let's sell drugs." I said, "Nah, I'm staying with the program." They said, "But you're not making any money." These days, it seems to me, if you don't have money, nobody knows you.

I don't have a car, and these kids are driving around in $80,000 Mercedes. I feel very jealous. Did I go the wrong way? But a few are dead too. Not all are dead; a few are living swell. One has a house in Texas. I see this, and it angers me. What my friend did in two years, it will take me damn near a lifetime to do. It's easy to tell kids in school they've got to have patience. But when a friend drops out and does well, it makes you ask what's really at the end of the rainbow for you. He doesn't live under his mama's roof anymore. I do.

Just because I'm saying this stuff doesn't mean I'm going to do it. I made my decision. I started it and I want to finish it. I'm itching now. It's time to start my chapter.

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made it anyway. Witness the Boston Compact, the most written about, talked about, glorified, and maligned school/business collaboration going. In 1982 a group of companies in Boston guaranteed that by 1985 they would hire 1,000 graduates a year from the city's degenerate public schools. In return, the schools promised to raise standards, reduce absenteeism, and stanch the flow of students dropping out—36% of each graduating class.

BY 1985 a new curriculum was in place, attendance was up, and 900 seniors got jobs. But the dropout news was depressing: 43% of the class of '85 quit. Says William Spring, director of community affairs at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and one of the originators of the Compact: "We did well on the externals—providing jobs. But actual reform of inner-city schools is tough. You need to give kids the assurance that if they graduate they'll get a job. But you also need to give them an education relevant to where they are. The teachers are teaching Shakespeare, but the kids can't read."

To attack that problem, the Boston Compact created Compact Ventures, a program that provides remedial education, mentors, and field trips to ninth- and tenth-graders—an age group viewed by many, including youngsters themselves, as a real danger spot. "Middle school is the crucible of the education process," says Edward Dooley, executive director of the Boston Compact and assistant to the superintendent of schools in Boston. "I understand you've got to get to kids early. But the real choices emerge at 14, 15, 16. Their bodies grow up. That's when you've got to be there for them, with mentors, innovative education, and exciting experiences."

The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, a school/business partnership modeled after the Boston Compact and led by Procter & Gamble President John Pepper, offers reinforcement at all levels of the system: preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds, smaller classes for elementary school children, mentors for middle-school students, and job guarantees for high school graduates. The National Alliance of Business, which gave seed money to the Cincinnati venture, is providing small grants and technical assistance to 11 other cities—including Louisville, Albuquerque, and San Diego—to create similar programs.

Veterans of successful school/business ventures say that for a partnership to hold together, the following ingredients are essential: sustained top-level involvement from companies and schools; people from both sides who work full time to coordinate the project; shared goals and responsibilities; and the presence of a business intermediary to help move young people successfully from school to work.

CAREFUL, though. Lack of coordination can defeat even the best-laid plans. Memphis was a classic example of a city long on good-will efforts—adopt-a-school programs, youth employment programs, teacher award programs—and awfully short on results. "We saw we were just pouring money at the edges," says Carol Coletta, a consultant with First Tennessee Bank. This spring business leaders in Memphis went directly to school superintendent Willie Herenton to ask what his priorities were for the next three years. The business people inquired, "What can we most do to help you?" Herenton had three goals: to lower the dropout rate, to have 90% of third-graders performing at a third-grade level, and to increase the number of options a student had for attending school. Business leaders are just now organizing to help Herenton achieve these objectives.

For all the attention American students are getting, they still lack something that most Japanese students have: a *kyoiku mama*, or education mother. "The single biggest influence on a kid's ability to learn is parental involvement," says Jerome Rosow, president of the Work in America Institute. "Research shows that the home outweighs everything, including intelligence." So now corporate America finds itself assuming one final role: surrogate mother. To help employees foster motivation and achievement in their children, Work in America is developing kits to distribute to 10,000 Employee Assistance Programs around the country. Through videotapes, learning games, and counseling, workers will learn how to help their children read and do homework.

What more can business do? Constance Barkley, executive vice president of the New Orleans Metropolitan Area Committee, puts it best: "In the end, there is no substitute for active, individual involvement, whether it is going to a voting booth and pulling a lever, or going to a school and talking to teachers, or getting involved in a child's life." Barkley knows better than most how individual actions, added together, produce results. Says she: "What I've seen happening between the business community and the school community in the last two years gives me hope. In New Orleans you don't see people trying to assign blame anymore. Now everyone is racing to be part of the solution." ■

SAVING THE SCHOOLS HOW BUSINESS CAN HELP

Let's stop lamenting the crisis and do something about it. A FORTUNE conference of corporate leaders, educators, and politicians tells what steps business can take now. ■ *by Nancy J. Perry*

IT'S LIKE Pearl Harbor. The Japanese have invaded, and the U.S. has been caught short. Not on guns and tanks and battleships—those are yesterday's weapons—but on mental might. In a high-tech age where nations increasingly compete on brainpower, American schools are producing an army of illiterates. Companies that cannot hire enough skilled workers now realize they must do something to save the public schools. Not to be charitable, not to promote good public relations, but to survive.

In many ways, today's education crisis is more serious than the grim days of 1941, when American troops had to train for war with wooden rifles. Then, in four short years, U.S. industry created a war machine that helped conquer two heavily armed foreign powers. Today's problems cannot be solved simply by building new plants and equipment. And yet, says Procter & Gamble President John Pepper, "I wonder if we are talking about this issue the way the U.S. sat down to talk about what to do after Pearl Harbor? Do we have the same degree of intensity, the same degree of absolute determination that there is no way we are going to fail?"

A few people do, perhaps none more so than Owen "Brad" Butler, the retired chairman of Procter & Gamble (see box). But momentum has been slow to build, partly because the save-the-schools movement has been an uncoordinated effort. Says Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, a union comprising 24% of the nation's teachers: "We have hundreds of people struggling to find the same answers. We need a system of sharing and communication."

With that in mind, FORTUNE in September convened a two-day summit at the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C. More than 100 leaders from business, government, and academia met to discuss specific steps business could take to help the schools. It was an action-oriented conference focused on solutions, not problems. As American Express President Louis V. Gerstner put it, "We need to adopt that famous Noah principle: No more prizes for predicting rain. Prizes only for building arks." Participants addressed two questions: What should business do to make the schools better? What should business not do?

The best answer to the second question came from Mary Futrell, president of the National Education Association, the largest teachers' union. She said: "Don't come to us and say, 'This is the plan.' If you do, the education community will resist. But if you

THE FACTS

- Of the 3.8 million 18-year-old Americans in 1988, fully 700,000 had dropped out of school and another 700,000 could not read their high school diplomas.
- Illiteracy among minority students is as high as 40%. By the year 2000, minorities will make up a majority of the school-age population in ten states.
- In standardized tests between 1983 and 1986, American high school seniors came in last in biology among students from 13 countries, including Hungary and Singapore. They were 11th in chemistry and ninth in physics.
- In all, 84% of the 23,000 people who took an exam for entry-level jobs at New York Telephone in 1988 failed.
- Before a health clinic opened, 300 pregnancies occurred in a single year among the 1,000 girls at Chicago's DuSable High School.

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come and say, 'We will work with you to help determine what the plan should be,' you will have 100% cooperation."

In a rare display of unanimity, executives, educators, and politicians called for a complete restructuring of the school system—a perestroika of public education. Said former Secretary of Education William Bennett: "What we need is something approaching a revolution." That he got no disagreement from Shanker and Futrell—who represent the unions Bennett loves to hate—was in itself revolutionary. Said Shanker: "We must start thinking of students as workers, which means we've got to deal with the same issues business does. One of the most helpful things you could do is talk to us about the kinds of problems you found and the kinds of changes you brought about in your own companies."

Even restructuring the schools will not do much for the 20% of U.S. children who are poor and who enter school so far behind that it is almost impossible to catch up. "We are talking about the child who was not properly nourished, who has never had any intellectual stimulation," says Butler. "To put that child into first grade unprepared is like taking a husky 22-year-old who has never seen a football game and putting him on the field against the Cincinnati Bengals. In five minutes that youngster will learn to hate football."

Clearly, there is no single cure for what ails the schools. But on the following pages, you will see how business can make a difference.

RESTRUCTURE THE SYSTEM

If 80% of the products a company turned out were defective, would the chief executive solve his problem by asking employees to work 20 minutes longer each day? Hardly. As Al Shanker puts it, "If you wanted to turn your business around, you would be asking, 'How can we fundamentally restructure what we are doing?' " Schools, he says, must do the same.

No wonder the schools are producing so many lemons. They function much like the 19th-century factories they were originally designed to resemble. Batches of boys and girls still roll like widgets from room to room where, Shanker says, "each teacher puts a part on the kid." Classes are large and impersonal, lectures predominate, and every 40 minutes, just when the children settle down—GONG!—the bell sends them off to their next station. The result: gaggles of graduates with the forbearance needed for unskilled manual labor, but devoid of the problem-solving skills necessary for today's globally competitive workplace. Says Theodore Sizer, chairman of Brown University's Department of Education: "CEOs must realize that there are serious systemic and structural problems in the schools—on the insides of schools. The culture must be changed, and the change must be radical."

How can business help? Primarily by supporting imaginative individuals who dare to challenge the status quo. The Exxon Education Foundation, for instance, recently approved a $600,000 grant to the Coalition of Essential Schools, a group of 56 high schools around the U.S. that Sizer organized to experiment with new approaches to teaching. Classes in a coalition school contain an average of 20 students and may last as long as two hours. Teachers act as coaches rather than as conduits of information. Semeka Smith, 13, a student at Manhattan's Central Park East, explains: "In a traditional school we would be asked, 'How did Christopher Columbus come to America?' Here we're asked, 'What other mode of travel could he have used?' You use your mind more."

Testing new pedagogical approaches can be exhausting for teachers, who are often faced with redesigning an entire curriculum. "There's no textbook for what we're doing," says Larry Barnes, a vice principal at R.L. Paschal High School in Fort Worth, Texas. Paschal is trying out Sizer's concepts on 135 of its 2,100 students, effectively creating a school within a school. Kids must be reading at their grade level to participate; teachers stay with the same students for four years. Says Barnes: "There's a lot of personalization here."

There's also some money—$267,000—from the Burnett Tandy Foundation, which was endowed by the wife of Charles Tandy, who started Tandy Corp. At the request of former superintendent I. Carl Candoli, the foundation agreed to pick up Barnes's salary and contribute toward a tenth month's salary for teachers participating in the experiment so they can attend workshops and seminars to develop the curriculum. It was the foundation's support, in fact, that persuaded the school board to go along with Candoli's tango with reform.

Last June the first 17 seniors in Paschal High's experimental program graduated; 15 went to college (overall, 60% of Paschal's students go to college). In August, Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, New Mexico, and Rhode Island announced they would try Sizer's ideas in at least ten schools each. Says Arnold Shore, executive director of Exxon's Education Foundation: "We are at the beginning of what promises to be a workable revolution."

MOBILIZE STATE-BY-STATE

How can the efforts of 16,000 school districts turn into a national restructuring of public education? Brad Butler has the answer: "Central leadership has got to come at the state level. There is a much better chance for coordinated reform within a

REPORTER ASSOCIATES *Alan Farnham and Susan E. Kuhn*

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state than for reform of a national system."

Minnesota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and California have already started to change. In each case, business leaders actively encouraged the reform. "My experience has been that if the business community and the governor want this thing to happen, it begins to happen very quickly," says Butler. "If either of those ingredients is lacking, it's very tough."

South Carolina, which enacted a 1-cent sales tax increase in 1984 to pay for its widely acclaimed Education Improvement Act, stands out as a paragon of reform for two reasons. First, the governor, the business community, parents, and educators were all involved. Second, the state set up a division of public accountability to monitor progress and make sure they *stayed* involved.

South Carolina business leaders signed on after former governor Richard Riley asked a group of 30 to serve alongside educators on two committees charged with drawing up an education-reform package. The businessmen were acting out of enlightened self-interest—a desperate need for better-educated workers. Says Montez Martin Jr., president of Montez Real Estate in Charleston: "We knew that our lifeline was at stake." Some companies had serious reservations about expanding in South Carolina unless voters passed the Education Improvement Act.

Corporations donated $100,000 to a foundation that sponsored TV commercials promoting the proposed reforms, ranging from higher teacher salaries to management training for principals. But the battle to win over the politicians was, in the words of House Speaker Pro Tem Jack Rogers, "a little like the charge of the light brigade." On opening day of the 1984 legislative session, the Education Improvement Act had virtually no support.

The business leaders persisted. One of South Carolina's largest ad agencies produced a videotape free of charge featuring 20 chief executives endorsing the bill. The *pièce de résistance* was a telephone bank, funded by corporate dollars, that alerted South Carolinians whenever their representatives were wavering on an education issue. Before one particularly tough vote, the bank phoned all the constituents of a representative who was still undecided. The next day the exasperated politician walked up to a business lobbyist, his hands filled with telephone messages. "That's enough," he said. "You've got my vote."

Since the Education Improvement Act was passed, the average combined math and verbal SAT scores in South Carolina have risen 35 points to 838—the largest increase in the nation. Teachers' salaries, once among the lowest in the U.S., have risen 48% to an average of $24,400 and are now in line with those in other states. Yet, warns reformer Robert Selman, president of Keenan Co., a Columbia real estate firm: "It would be an enormous mistake to assume that this first wave of improvement has fixed the schools and that we can get back to business as usual."

The two committees that drafted the Education Improvement Act are already planning for the 1990s. Their goals are ambitious: They want to begin restructuring the schools, reduce the South Carolina dropout rate, and make preschool programs more widely available.

GIVE PARENTS A CHOICE

Former Secretary of Education William Bennett says we should have it. Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton says we should have it. A Gallup poll says 71% of Americans think we should have it. Yet because of virulent opposition from the education establishment, only one state, Minnesota, is daring to try it statewide.

"It" is choice: letting parents decide which public school their children attend. Advocates say that if nothing else can reform the schools, free-market forces will. "In industry your customers vote every day on the quality of your company, by either buying or not buying your product. We ought to have some competition in the education system." So says Joseph Alibrandi, chairman of Whittaker Corp. and a member of the California Business Roundtable, which has been pushing for choice in the state for three years.

Critics of choice, primarily teachers' unions, including Futrell's NEA, see it as a forerunner to a voucher system that would allow parents to select among public and private schools, a move the critics fear would destroy the public ones. Another worry is that choice would drain inner-city and rural schools of their best students—and their state funding—leaving those schools in worse shape than before.

Minnesota hopes to prove the critics wrong. In May, after four years of lobby-

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ing by Governor Rudy Perpich and the Minnesota Business Partnership, the legislature passed a law that permits parents to send their children to any public school in the state; $3,600 in state tuition will follow each child who changes schools. The landmark legislation, which will take effect over the next two years, grew out of a 1983 study commissioned by the Business Partnership, a group of 82 chief executives.

Choice programs have been available in Minneapolis since 1971 and to other Minnesota school districts that wanted them since last year. In practice the idea has its downside. For instance, some parents of Minneapolis kindergarteners now find they have too much choice. In addition to considering a school's proximity and facilities, they must also think about its philosophy: There are as many as ten programs for 5-year-olds, from Montessori, which is ungraded and emphasizes self-teaching, to Fundamentals, a teacher-directed program, complete with report cards and a dress code.

Still, a survey of 137 parents who switched their children to different schools last year showed that all were more satisfied with the quality of education. Says Michael Kirst, a professor of education at Stanford: "Everybody is waiting to see what happens in Minnesota." If choice works there, it could be one answer to the need for radical reform.

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LOWER THE DROPOUT RATE

If you think education is expensive—taxpayers pay about $4,200 a year to send a child to school—try ignorance. It costs some $14,000 a year to keep a prisoner in jail; 62% of all prison inmates are high school dropouts. Welfare families drain the government of an average $4,300 a year; dropouts head more than half of them. The cycle of ignorance, poverty, and crime seems almost unstoppable: Despite a plethora of remedies prescribed over the past several years, 25% of all high school students drop out before graduating—about the same percentage as 15 years ago.

In the heart of Appalachia, Kentucky's Ashland Oil has been waging a one-company campaign to lower the dropout rate and to encourage other educational reforms. Since 1982 the $6.9-billion-a-year oil refiner has put its entire corporate regional advertising budget into education. Last year, alarmed that about one-third of Kentucky students leave school before graduating, the company devoted all that money to dropout prevention.

The cornerstone of Ashland's campaign is a series of commercials directed at children and their parents. One particularly poignant ad shows a young girl holding her baby and saying: "Jobs are pretty scarce around here. Specially since neither my husband or me finished school. Things are gonna be different for this one. He's gonna stay in high school if I have to tie him to his chair. Sometimes I wish someone had done me that way." The National Advertising Council and the Council of State Governments were so moved by the commercials that they are now using them, without the Ashland logo, in a nationwide public service campaign aimed at reducing the dropout rate.

Ashland also devised a clever way of bringing the message "Don't Drop Out" directly into the classroom. The company produced a videotape showing how an Ashland television commercial is made, beginning with storyboards that illustrate frame by frame what will happen in the ad. The videotape also stresses skills, such as reading and writing, that are needed to produce a commercial, and to succeed at just about any job. Elementary and junior high teachers show the video to their students and then pass out blank storyboards. The children are told to draw their ideal life stories—but they must start with graduation from high school.

Often the results are just what Ashland hopes for. One sixth-grader named Stephanie shows herself progressing from high school to law school to the Supreme Court. Her final entry: the "good life"! *continued*

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RAISE COLLEGE ENROLLMENTS

A high school diploma doesn't buy what it used to. According to a recent study sponsored by the William T. Grant Foundation in New York, male high school graduates age 20 to 24 earned 28% less in real terms in 1986 than their counterparts of 1973. A college diploma, on the other hand, buys more than ever. The average annual income of a college graduate in 1986 was 49% higher than that of a high school graduate; in 1980 it was 25% higher.

That's the dollars. What about the sense? Because the academic year is 40 to 60 days shorter in the U.S. than in Europe or Japan, many American students are two years behind their international peers at graduation; for them a college education is a chance to play catchup. Says Governor Clinton of Arkansas: "The U.S. has the highest college-going rate in the world [57%], and it is still too low because of the deficit our kids carry out of high school." It is particularly important, he says, to get more poor young people into college.

In rural Lowndes County, Alabama, a largely black area with a high illiteracy rate, General Electric is trying to do just that. The GE Foundation has committed $1 million to triple the number of college-bound youngsters in the county over the next five years. The money will pay for SAT-preparation courses, teacher-enrichment programs, a Saturday academy in science and math conducted by professors from nearby Tuskegee University, and scholarships to Alabama colleges for high school graduates.

General Electric has a compelling reason to educate the children of Lowndes County. The company has invested $700 million to develop a plastics plant in the area and, as Tuskegee president Benjamin Payton notes, "Right now there isn't a single black person in Lowndes County who has sufficient education to work as a chemical engineer in that plant." But, he adds, "I promise you that in five years there will be."

Initially GE will work with students who show the greatest promise. But with each successive class, the company plans to reach further down into the pool. Says Paul Ostergard, president of the GE Foundation: "When you're running programs like this, you need success models fast. But if we don't have the commitment to go deeper each time, we're not going to make it."

RECRUIT BETTER TEACHERS

Consider this statement by actor Bill Cosby in a brochure for Recruiting Young Teachers Inc., a nonprofit group led by David Rockefeller Jr.: "If you want to know who really molds our children's future, it's not the politicians, the movie stars, or corporate leaders. It's our teachers."

Now consider these statistics:

- The SAT scores of high school students who plan to become teachers are, on average, 23 to 40 points lower than those of students intending to enter other professions.
- In Massachusetts, only one in five elementary teachers has had *any* college math or science.
- By 1995, if current trends continue, American schools are projected to be short 700,000 qualified teachers.

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The facts are scary, but not surprising. "We decided, perhaps 30 years ago, that teaching wasn't very important," says Brad Butler. "We stopped making it the kind of career that drew the right kind of young people into it." Now, finally convinced of the crisis, industry is working to bring more, and better, teachers into the schools. Gannett, Hearst, Primerica, and Time Inc. are among the companies that have contributed to Rockefeller's organization, founded in 1986 to persuade talented men and women to become teachers. In February, Recruiting Young Teachers began an ad campaign featuring an earnest young man—whom much of America would love to grow old with—coaxing and coaching his students. So far, 100,000 potential recruits have called the organization's 800 number for more information.

Concerned primarily about the shortage of science and math teachers, Polaroid has developed a program it hopes will serve as a model for companies nationwide. Project Bridge enables up to ten Polaroid employees a year to switch careers and become math or science teachers. Participants enter a one-year certification program, which Polaroid pays for, at Harvard University or Lesley College in Boston. The company gives employees their full base pay during the certification period. "I've always had the desire to teach, but I probably wouldn't have done it if Polaroid hadn't offered this bridge," says Jim Rinkus, 55, a plant engineering manager. He is one of six Polaroid employees, age 37 to 68, who left this fall to become teachers.

Polaroid money also makes it possible for teachers on sabbatical to work at the company, where they learn more about industrial applications for math and science. Faye Ruopp, a teacher at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School near Boston, spent the 1987-88 school year at Polaroid. In terms of her professional development, she says, it was the best thing she has ever done. "I feel that I'm teaching better than I ever have," says Ruopp. "I now know specific instances, like camera testing, where you need to know statistics. If you can tell kids why they need to learn something, the chances of them learning it are far greater."

PROMOTE JOB TRAINING

When four New York City banks tried to fill 250 entry-level teller jobs last summer, they found only 100 qualified applicants. The banks' problem raises a compelling question: Aside from teaching the three R's, how can schools best prepare students for the workplace? American Express and Shearson Lehman Hutton think they have an answer. In 1982, working with the New York City public schools, they began the Academy of Finance, a two-year program for juniors and seniors that combines classroom instruction with on-the-job experience. In addition to their regular course loads, Academy students take classes in economics and finance, and attend seminars that stress good work habits, such as dressing neatly and being on time. Between their junior and senior years they work as paid interns at financial services firms.

The Academy's goal is to equip students for the workplace in general, and for the financial services industry in particular. "The results we've gotten from these kids are just great," says Stephen Lacoff, personnel director at Bear Stearns, who, despite slow times on Wall Street, hired 25 interns from the Academy last summer, mainly as back office and clerical workers. "They're bright and aggressive and they work really hard." To be accepted by the Academy, students must have a 75 average, make a two-year commitment to the program, and demonstrate a "positive attitude." In other words, the Academy helps kids who would probably have made it anyway. Says Gerstner of American Express: "The purpose of the Academy is enhancement, not reform."

To that end, it has been extremely successful. In New York City, 50 companies, including Oppenheimer, Salomon Brothers, and Standard & Poor's, help participating high schools with everything from financial support to curriculum planning. Nationwide the American Express Foundation sponsors Academy programs in 30 high schools in 14 cities at an annual cost of $450,000. Because the demand from schools is beginning to outstrip American Express resources, the company is about to establish a National Academy Foundation. Composed of business sponsors and educators, it will expand the academy concept to

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other industries, such as insurance and retailing. Last year American Express launched an Academy of Tourism and Travel, which is now training high school students in Miami, New York, and London.

The Academy of Finance might be too good for its own good. In an unexpected turn, 90% of its graduates have gone on to college—leaving New York City banks still struggling to find entry-level tellers.

SUPPORT PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

No investment in education offers a higher payback than preschool for poor youngsters. A study by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Michigan, shows that one year of quality preschool before kindergarten cuts the likelihood that a child will become a dropout by one-third. Yet preschool programs such as Head Start reach fewer than 20% of children poor enough to qualify.

By themselves, business leaders probably can't do much to expand preschool programs. But they can lobby state and federal governments to spend more money on early childhood education. Says the NEA's Futrell: "When CEOs speak about the need for Head Start, America listens."

Lack of money is one big problem. Lack of trained teachers is another. Head Start has a 30% turnover rate, a figure few companies could tolerate. Irving Harris, a Chicago businessman and philanthropist who has invested $20 million in programs for disadvantaged children, warns: "We're never going to get the job done unless we have trained people to do it." Institutions such as the Erikson Institute in Chicago and Bank Street College of Education in New York City are putting special emphasis on training preschool professionals, but they, too, badly need financial support.

A special project under way in Arkansas might provide a partial solution to the twin deficits of money and teachers: the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY). Developed 20 years ago in Israel to prepare immigrant children for the rigors of Israeli schools, the program uses parents as teachers. Working with storybooks and worksheets, mothers like the one pictured on page 43 teach their 3- and 4-year-olds 15 minutes a day, five days a week, 30 weeks a year for two years. The parents are trained by paraprofessionals, who visit the homes once a week. Training and salaries for the aides constitute the main expense of the program, which comes to $500 to $600 per child a year in Arkansas; traditional preschool programs cost $4,000 a child.

In Arkansas, 1,400 mostly low-income families have become HIPPY adherents. The results, says Governor Clinton, have been "phenomenal." Tests in one school district showed a 33-month gain in educational level among HIPPY children in 16 months. Parents are stimulated as well. After one year of working with HIPPY, nearly half the mothers in two Arkansas counties —all of whom were on welfare—went back to high school, got a job, or applied to enroll in job-training courses.

INSPIRE THE STUDENTS

The scene is a large auditorium, full of inner-city school kids. Up front, a young black man in a Naval officer's uniform paces back and forth, holding a portable microphone. "With an education," he says, "you cannot be denied." The kids watch, enraptured. "Name the last six presidents," he commands. One student answers correctly; the Navy officer dramatically gives him $10. The audience goes wild.

The music blares. From the back of the room a strapping man in a flashy Navy flight suit and sunglasses strides toward the stage. He stares out at the audience. "You think Michael Jackson is bad?" he asks. "You think punk gangs called the Bloods are bad? They're not bad. *I'm* bad. I fly 550 miles an hour. And if those gangs bother me with their .44 magnums and their spray cans, I'll go get my boys—and my gang is called the United States Navy. You know what makes me bad? I have a college education. That's what makes me bad."

Meet Navy lieutenants Montel Williams, 32, a special-duty intelligence officer, and Drew Brown, 33, an attack pilot now in the reserves. They call themselves "The American Dream," and they are on their toughest mission yet: to motivate kids to stay in school. Since January, Brown and Williams, who both grew up in the ghetto, have spoken to 100,000 students, teachers, and principals in 15 cities. Their message is simple: Stay in school. Go to college. Stay off drugs. And most important: You can be a success. Says Brown, whose father, the late Drew Bundini Brown, was the trainer and motivator for heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali: "You know why these kids drop out of school? Because nobody's ever

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told them that they're good. That they can make it through college. I was a punk kid like the rest of them, but I had something special. My father gave me two choices: graduate college or death."

The two men are powerful persuaders. A week after they spoke to 15,000 students in Baltimore, participation in student government and other school organizations rose 15%. Procter & Gamble's Pepper was so impressed when he saw them on the *Today* show that he invited them to Cincinnati. They spent four days there in September, talking to 10,000 students.

Inspired by the impact they are making, Brown, who graduated with a degree in business administration and economics from Southern University in New Orleans, and Williams, who has an engineering degree from the U.S. Naval Academy, plan to begin speaking full time starting in February. (The Navy will allow the men to wear their uniforms during presentations.) Their fee depends on what cities or school districts can afford. Brown, however, offers the following advice free of charge:

"I propose serious involvement by everyone. If you can't get your companies involved, *you* go get a kid. Take one kid you don't know to a museum. Do you know why kids don't make it? Because they don't know what success is. Why don't you show a kid your $300,000 house? Show him the hard work you do from seven in the morning until ten at night. He thinks you just popped out of your mother and became CEO. He doesn't know you worked as a stock boy. He doesn't believe he can touch you. Show him your office. He might just say, 'I think I'm going to college because I like this kind of life.' "

Are business leaders, educators, and politicians prepared, finally, to confront the crisis in the American schools with World War II–like determination? The concern, the commitment, and the concrete examples evident at the FORTUNE Education Summit are reason to hope. But there is also reason to fear: Producing a better-educated work force will take at least a generation. As Brad Butler says: "We are at risk, because we may lose patience."

Bill Bennett talks about dedication. "In the end," he says, quoting his hero, Jaime Escalante, the math teacher featured in the movie *Stand and Deliver*, "reform takes *ganas:* desire, perspiration. The Japanese have a word for this too: *ganbatte*. It means persistence." Persistence, patience, hard work, and teamwork can win this war. Says South Carolina's Montez Martin Jr.: "When the business leaders and the political leaders, the community leaders and the educators, get together behind a good cause, nobody can stop us. Nothing can keep it from happening, even when the odds are against us." The odds may just be starting to change. ■

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Jane Juska

The Unteachables

At my school they're called the Bs. After their ninth grade year, they are tracked into the non-college, terminal classes. And so they take English IIB, English IIIB, and English IVB. Along the way, many of them take night school courses to make up for the classes they've flunked in regular school; lots of them take drug classes instead of going to juvenile hall or paying huge fines.

Here is what William Glasser says in his *Control Theory in the Classroom* to people like me who teach the Bs:

> *Unless you have had your head in the sand, you cannot fail to agree that about half of the secondary students in your regular classes make no consistent effort to learn...It is also obvious that as much as you know that this serious situation exists, you seem powerless to change this frustrating situation...*

Over the years I have become very fond of my Bs. They are truthful, painfully so; they are often funny (and yes, sullen); they are free from artifice; their greediness extends beyond grades to important things like pick-ups and Heavy Metal. And, for reasons unclear to me, I trust them. I trust them not to trash my car; I trust them to know which eye shadow looks best at night; I trust them because, evidence sometimes to the contrary, I believe they are good people. But Glasser is right: my Bs "make no consistent effort to learn" and so far I have been "powerless to change this frustrating situation."

Further, and this is no doubt one of the roots of my frustration, the responsibility for learning falls upon me. I have known for a long time that I work harder in my classes than any of my kids. And I learn more. It doesn't matter how much fun I

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...they hate school and cut school and fail school ... I believe that's because, while school offers them survival and belonging, at the same time it refuses them power and freedom.

try to make "Fall of the House of Usher"; I am the one getting deeper and deeper into the story; the kids are the ones having the fun. Sometimes, they have fun watching me get off on some weird psychoanalytic tack, something about how Madeleine Usher is really Guilt. "Oh yeah?" they say. And turn to more important business.

What to do? Dr. Glasser, talk to me.

> *...humans not only need 1) to survive and reproduce, but also 2) to belong and love, 3) to gain power, 4) to be free and 5) to have fun.*

So what does this say about my Bs? My Bs do not drop out of school. They do not want to take the GED or go to continuation high. They get enough from regular school to continue their attendance here. What that is, I'm not sure: friends surely; more likely, a structure for lives that often are frayed around the edges if not bombed out in the center. School is for these kids a relatively safe place. But they hate school and cut school and fail school, and if Dr. Glasser is right, I believe that's because, while school offers them survival and belonging, at the same time it refuses them power and freedom. I am part of that school; for 55 minutes every day, I am school. What would happen if I turned over my power to them? After 25 years of teaching, I decide to find out.

September rolls around (it always does), and I get scared. There they are, all Bs and not yet friendly. How can I say something completely off the wall like "Well, guys, I'm turning the classroom over to you"? I can't, so I play it safe. I get out E.A. Poe and we, excuse me, I learn a little more about Madeleine and Roderick. The kids know where I am coming from (center stage) and I know where they are (in the lobby). All is going as expected. But not all is going well.

E.A. Poe under our, whoop, my belt once again, I decide to go for it. This is what I have thought about for a year. This is the beginning of my experiment. I am manipulating them, I'll admit it, into thinking about learning. I say, coolly, casually, pretending like I don't really care, "Let's talk about reading." "What for?" "Well," I say, "why should we read?" "Oh, yeah?" This time the 'yeah' is different. This time, it translates into "Hey, here's something kind of interesting." I take a deep breath. We are on our way.

So we talk, just a little bit, and then we write what we think are some answers to that question. Here's what Shaari wrote: "If you don't know how to read it's like you are blind. Except it's not your eyes-sight. It's in your mind." And Matt: "The reason I read is because I don't want to be embarresed about how I can't."

Most of the papers, somewhere in the midst of complaints about being forced to read, hating to read, come to something similar. I am awash in enthusiasm. "O.K., then let's read. Here is the list of books in our bookroom. Do you want to read different books? All the same book? What?"

They look at me; at least, they look at me. Some are open-mouthed; most eye me with suspicion. What is going on here? Undeterred, I say, "Well, get into your writing groups and decide." (They had chosen their own writing groups in September, their first sign, had they recognized it, that things in this class might be different.) "So what are those books about?" they want to know. A great question. I answer it. They move into their groups, decide they want to read one book together as a whole class (the Standard Operating Procedure of English classes) and that it should be *Ordinary People*.

Day two I put on the board: "Objective: to read *Ordinary People* with student involvement and understanding. Challenge: to devise a plan by which this can be done. Task: to come up with, in your group, a plan of attack. How much should we read? Homework? What would you do in class? What should the teacher do?"

Everybody gets into their groups and every group comes up with a different plan of attack. (Do not despair, I say to myself; they bought the Objective and Challenge.) So we put all the plans on the board, and select the most common elements of each. The Ideal Plan of Attack comes out this way:

Getting people involved:

no discussions unless students want to
class meets in groups every couple of days to discuss chapters read if they want to

Assignments:

10 chapter per week (10 pages a night) so we can finish by Christmas

homework only if reading not done in class
one-half hour per day for reading, or every other day in class
Fridays, free read
vocabulary should come from the book

The Teacher will:

make out quizzes, tests
read whatever book she wants
not talk unless she is asked
show the movie at the end

In my mind's eye, a vast desert opens, peopled by students wandering aimlessly about, some carrying books, most not, one explaining to an adult shade, "Well, our teacher said to do anything we want." And, even more depressing, "anything we want" excludes the teacher: I am not wanted. Except yes, I am still the keeper of the gate; I should be the examiner, maybe slip the quizzes and tests (multiple choice, Scantron) under the door, pick them up after class, and slide the results back under. My feelings are hurt. But I won't let them know. You know what happens to wounded animals in the jungle.

Instead, I say something like, "What about those class discussions? And those quizzes and those vocabulary words? Should I do them or should you?" By now, minds are churning, eyes are glistening, I can almost hear the, Oh, man, I could come out of this class with a fuckin A! "Yeah, I think we could." Oh, and are they ever earnest. "Like we should handle those things." "How?" "In our groups!" Yippee! they're doing it; they're going to be the teacher!

Then I tell them, "This is my class, too, and I need some writing from you so I can be a part of this whole thing." They are surprised I am interested in being part of what they think is a pretty shabby little operation, but obviously I am, especially when I tell them, well finally confess, that my feelings were hurt when they left me out of their Ideal Plan. So they let me show them about reading logs and agree to do a couple. "For now."

I am also genuinely puzzled as to how I am to know how well small group discussions are going, seeing as how, according to their plan, I'm hardly in the room. "Trust us," Shannon tells me. "Oh, bull," says Russ. "You know she can't trust us." So, they agree that I can watch their discussions. "For now." "What about grades?" I ask. "Do you want any kind of evaluation?" "Well, sure, we want grades! So give us points when you watch us! And you should grade us on our vocabulary quizzes and discussions too!" The A looms ever larger in their heads. As for me, I'm just glad to be back in the room.

A week swims by; it is dreamy, that is to say, sometimes wild and definitely weird: the kids read and write and talk about

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Editor's Note

"In an increasingly complex technological and multicultural society, the questions that surround writing—how it develops; how it connects to such processes as reading, speaking, and thinking; what its relationship is to identity and power; and how we can best teach it—take on urgency and demand answers." These are words that we have put into a new brochure from the Center for the Study of Writing. I've pilfered them here for my own purposes: I thought they made a fitting anchor for Quarterly *1989, as they capture the concerns that drive our teaching and our research and so capture the kinds of issues that we attempt to address in this publication. They give me a way, too, to undergird a call for articles, which we hope you will submit to us for consideration in the coming months. While we get a good number of submissions—some that we solicit and some that come unsolicited—we feel lucky to have received as many manuscripts as we have without having put out a formal call. With the coming of the new year we want to issue such a call. We would like to hear from the spectrum of educators who comprise our readership—teachers of English and language arts and teachers who use writing across the curriculum; researchers investigating writing and the teaching and learning of writing; administrators and policymakers concerned about literacy and writing in our schools; teacher educators. . . . You have stories to tell, research to report, ideas to discuss. Let us hear from you.*

This issue represents a part of the spectrum. Jane Juska, who teaches English in secondary school, writes about a semester of experimental teaching with at-risk students, and how she relinquished her position at the center of the classroom. Marlene Griffith, Bruce Jacobs, Smokey Wilson and Margot Dashiell, who teach in a range of subjects at a community college, write also about students at-risk, and about a major project they developed that addresses these students' personal and educational needs. Their project has implications for all levels of schooling. Marjorie Roemer, a university English professor, relating her experience with a summer literature institute, addresses methods of teaching literature that shift authority from teacher to students. Peggy Riley, community college teacher of English, also discusses the teaching of literature, specifically, the use of writing to learn poetry. We are pleased to include, too, book reviews from John Maitino and Chris Anderson.

Happy reading. Happy 1989.

--M.S.

Imagery: Thinking with the Mind's Eye

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3. Kevin McKean, "Memory," *Discover*, November 1983: 24. This article reports on research linking memory and the learning process.

4. Robert Frost, "The Witch of Coos," *Robert Frost Reads His Poetry*, Caedmon, 61-7521, 1956. This audiotape is conveniently available through the Book-of-the-Month Club, Camp Hill, PA 17012.

5. Robert Frost, "Education by Poetry: A Meditative Monologue," *The Norton Reader*, ed. Arthur M. Eastman et al., 6th ed. (New York: Norton, 1984) 1025.

That this piece was originally a talk given to Amherst College in 1930 reinforces the point that poets may have preceded cognitive scientists in discovering the link between imagery and thinking. There is also food for thought in the fact that computers are unable to "think" metaphorically.

6. This sequence—writing about a poem before it's read, then reading the poem, then listening to the poem read aloud and discussing particular images from the poem in class, and finally writing a more formal paper—is effective with poems more complex and difficult than "The Witch of Coos." For example, before my students read Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," I ask them to write a paragraph in response to the following: Suppose you and someone you love very much are going to be separated for a while. What would your feelings be? What would you say to your loved one? Can you think of any images—pictures—to show your loved one how you feel about him or her and about the separation?

As they did with the Frost poem, the students create their own images, this time of the abstract ideas of love and separation. Doing so gives them a way into Donne's poem and can lead to a lively discussion of his central metaphor: the compass. This metaphor becomes even more vivid when one student reads the "Valediction" aloud while another manipulates a drawing compass to recreate graphically Donne's images.

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The Unteachables

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Ordinary People in small groups. On Wednesday, Group One, having spent Tuesday in the library preparing, leads a whole class discussion; they throw M&Ms to those who answer their questions; they throw M&Ms at those who refuse to answer and call them assholes. Then, they grade the class on participation. I record those grades in my book.

Far away in a corner of the room, I write my critique of Group One's efforts. They've done a good job: class participation is at an all-time high and their questions about the book show they have read well. I give them a B. ("You just can't use that language in here.")

On Friday, Group Two gives a vocabulary quiz, having listed the Important Words on the board earlier in the week. The quiz is a crossword puzzle. Almost everybody gets an A. I get a C because I didn't study. Group Two gets a B because the quiz doesn't include any writing. An argument ensues. I win. ("And the only reason you got a B is that yours is the first quiz.")

For me, the major difference is that I'm not in the spotlight. I have spent an enormous amount of time, behind the scenes, constructing the schedule and displaying it for all to see; classtime I spend with my trusty clipboard, monitoring their efficiency during their small group discussions and evaluating their teaching. I write in my journal: "I feel funny. I feel like a manager, a bookkeeper, a foreman. I must not forget the book." But I end my journal entry with "Oh, what a pleasure not to be pushed (by self) to cover material."

Here's the real difference: the kids are reading, they are writing, they are talking about the book. Maybe none of this is getting done as quickly or as intensively or as efficiently as it would if I were center stage. But no. I remember what Dave told me way back in October: "Face it, Mrs. Juska, nobody read 'Fall of the House of Whatever'!" Now they're proceeding, and in fact, not just in my wishful imagination. Whatever is happening in this classroom is really happening; it's not pretend.

Friday, I get a petition: "Get rid of the logs. Get rid of the clipboard." Signed, everybody.

What the hell. I do it. Week Two is chaos. They talk in their groups about who got kicked out of whose house, about the fight in the locker room, about getting drunk at Santa Cruz, about everything but the book. By Wednesday, I am ready to throw in the towel. This is ridiculous. Anything is better than this, even pretending. Then I remind myself: your instincts told you to trust these kids; don't quit now. On Thursday, I once again mask myself in nonchalance and, leaning casually against my desk, ask them how they think things are going. Things, they say, have not been going very well. They suggest that instead of the clipboard, they write to me at the end of each group discussion; they think it would be a good idea to tell what they talked about and how they're getting along with the book, and maybe I could write back. Yes, I could. They ask me if I would once in a while read aloud from the book and would I lead a whole class discussion maybe a couple of times. Yes, I would. They say, they believe they should be held responsible for learning something and do I think their suggestions would help? I do.

In December, as they had planned, they finish the book, write about it once they have chosen the topics, and watch the film. "This is the first book I ever read," says Darrin. "I think the movie was too hard on the mother," says Kathy. "What're we going to do next?" asks Bobby. God knows.

I look at my fifth period class. I look at them for real and all weekend wherever I go, whatever I do, I am seeing my Bs. I see Walkmans peeping out of athletic bags, ready for use should my vigilance weaken. I see makeup spilling out of purses. I see Mike, full of allergies or something, his head down on his desk with Jennifer behind him, twisting her feet onto his chair, leaning forward to breathe on his neck. I see Chuck, his boogie board balanced against the wall next to him, Matt drawing half-men, half-beasts for the record cover he wants to make. I see Lisa, her eyes vacant, unresponsive except when Bart makes obscene noises with his tongue. I see Darrin embrace (not even surreptitiously) Melissa.

What are we going to do next? What chance have I got? What chance has a book got? But wait, they read *Ordinary People*; they wrote about it; they talked about it. And, by golly, they liked it, not the book necessarily, but what had happened to the class. "This is my favorite class," a few of them said. Not all of them, not most of them, but a few.

"We want to go on a field trip," they tell me after Christmas break. What hath I wrought? But we do, and they agree to do an I-Search paper. They even agree to follow my instruction on how to write better sentences; they let me be center stage. "For now." We end the year reading and talking about books and writing stories and poems. By June, we're just about all in the orchestra.

But I think they learned, too, that once you've experienced power, second best is no longer good enough. And that maybe, just maybe, having power is worth the trouble.

What has not changed since the beginning of the year is their growing sense of power. I keep Glasser in mind whenever I feel like chickening out and going back to S.O.P. They like having some control. One afternoon I wheel out the overhead to show them some writing. Dave blurts out, "Put that thing away; whenever a teacher gets it out, I feel like I don't have any control." I put it away. I write on the board instead. Dave approves. I like their having control. I feel an enormous relief with the responsibility out there instead of down here, that is, right on top of my shoulders. What is being learned is being learned by them, not by me.

But I worry. I worry that the learning is not enough in quantity and in kind. I worry that they need sometimes to be cajoled, pushed into accepting the responsibility for what goes on in this room. I worry that once in a while they don't seem to like each other now any better than they did in September. And I especially worry when they say, "Let's go back to the old way. You do it. It's easier."

So I do. I try it for a couple of weeks in May, and we are all, every single one of us, miserable, bored, and disappointed in ourselves. We had given up and we knew it. The other way, the "New Way," we had learned a lot. The Bs learned that, while power is at first a heady thing, it soon becomes hard work. But I think they learned, too, that once you've experienced power, second best is no longer good enough. And that maybe, just maybe, having power is worth the trouble.

And I? I of course learned more than anyone; some things never change. I learned that, with some guidance, kids will choose what's good for them; I learned that believing in them will not result in mayhem. I learned that center stage belongs to everybody, that moving scenery in the wings can be rewarding, that selling tickets can be fun, and that sitting in the critic's seat is a heavy responsibility. And I learned that if you have the patience and the trust and determination to put it all together, you get great theater.

So what do we do next season? Well, in September, I give Power to the Bs; and then I charm, urge, and finally insist that they accept the responsibility that goes along with power. If they do, we're all home free.

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THE BEST OF THE LITERACY BEAT

1987

Prizewinning Articles from a contest of the
Media Resource Project on Literacy
of the Education Writers Association.
Made possible by a grant from the
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

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About the Media Resource Project on Literacy

The Best of the Literacy Beat is part of the Media Resource Project on Literacy, a project operated with funds from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The purpose of the Media Resource Project is to encourage reporters to take a more critical and comprehensive look at literacy. Other activities of the project include a newsletter, *The Literacy Beat*; regional seminars; an information clearinghouse; and commissioned papers by Michael Moss of *New York Newsday* ("Reporting on Literacy: Soft-Selling a Complex Political Story"), Jonathan Kozol ("What the Candidates Have Not Been Saying"), Irwin Kirsh, Ann Jungeblut and Donald Rock ("Reading Newspapers: The Practices of America's Young Adults"), and Elizabeth Stage ("Can We Stand and Deliver? Mathematical Literacy in the Workplace").

About the Education Writers Association

The Education Writers Association (EWA), is a professional association of education reporters. EWA was organized in July, 1947 by a group of education reporters covering the annual convention of a national education association in Cincinnati. An editorial appearing in The Cincinnati Enquirer on July 9 stated that "the newspapermen and women who are organizing the Education Writers Association feel that ... the reporting of school news requires just as much specialized expertness as the reporting of political, sports or police news." The editorial went on to say, "There is a definite place for an Education Writers Association, and we have nothing but wishes for success for the men and women who have brought about its organization."

The news of education is as important as it ever was, and it still remains the purpose of the Education Writers Association to work for the improvement of education reporting to the general public. The organization has grown considerably since 1947. EWA has more than 600 members in most of the states, Canada and Puerto Rico. Active members include reporters from print and broadcast media. Associate members include writers and information officers for organizations, school districts, and colleges and universities.

The Education Writers Association serves the cause of education writing and its members in a variety of ways. We conduct an annual national seminar and business meeting each spring where the most important educational issues of the day are discussed by some of the leading figures of the day. Regional workshops and special seminars are scheduled to serve the specific needs of members. There is an annual awards competition to honor the best education writing, and thousands of dollars are awarded to winners. EWA publishes a newsletter six times a year to keep members regularly informed about the organization and events affecting members.

The organization has taken on a number of special projects recently. These include a resource project for reporters on literacy issues, the development of a tabloid newsletter focusing on effective programs for early adolescents, and two investigatory reports, one on the status of school building and maintenance, and the second on young adults in their first jobs.

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The Best of the Literacy Beat

Sponsored by the Education Writers Association, articles and broadcast segments in **The Best of the Literacy Beat** were chosen from among entries submitted in four categories: features; series; radio; and television. Entries were published or broadcast between January 1, 1987 and December 31, 1987.

Judges for the 1987 Best of the Literacy Beat were:

(From the American Society of Newspaper Editors Literacy Committee)

Jay Ambrose	*El Paso Herald-Post*, chair
Elise Burroughs	American Society of Newspaper Editors
Wayne Ezell	*Boca Raton News*
Tom Blount	*Decatur Herald & Review*
Jean Sharley Taylor	*The Los Angeles Times*
Tim Gallagher	*The Albuquerque Tribune*

Also:

Michael Moss	*New York Newsday*
Carl Sessions Stepp	University of Maryland School of Journalism;
Arlene Fingeret	North Carolina State University

The Savvy Reader

John Demjanjuk is on trial because some people believe he was a brutal prison guard for the Nazis during World War II. His is the second Nazi war criminal trial to be held in Israel.

John Demjanjuk is on trial in Israel.

Demjanjuk's name is said this way: *Dem-YON-yook*.

Many people say John Demjanjuk was a prison guard at Treblinka. Treblinka was a concentration camp in Poland during World War II.

A story below reports on the trial.

A concentration camp is a place where people are kept during a war. During World War II, six million Jews were killed. Most of them were killed in concentration camps.

The German leader, Adolf Hitler, was head of the Nazi party in Germany. Nazis said the Jews were causing all of Germany's problems.

Other people were killed by the Nazis. But the Jews were killed only because they were Jews.

Many witnesses at the Demjanjuk trial say he was the guard they called "Ivan the Terrible." He tortured and killed many Jews, they say.

Ivan is a Russian word for John. Prisoners called the guard "Ivan the Terrible" because that was the name of another mean man. Ivan the Terrible was the first czar (king) of Russia.

Demjanjuk was born in the Ukraine. The Ukraine is now part of the Soviet Union. Demjanjuk came to the United States after World War II and lived in Cleveland, Ohio, for many years.

Demjanjuk was *deported* by the United States last year. That means he was sent out of the United States.

The United States government said Demjanjuk had lied about who he was. That meant he could no longer be a United States citizen.

He is on trial in Israel because Israel is the Jewish state. The killing of the Jews was a crime against the Jewish people.

Demjanjuk says that he is not "Ivan the Terrible." He says that Russians are making up these things about him. His lawyer says "Ivan the Terrible" died during the war.

Demjanjuk is the second man to be put on trial in Israel for killing Jews during World War II.

The first man was Adolf Eichmann. After World War II, he ran away to Argentina. In 1961, he was kidnapped by Israelis.

In his trial, Eichmann sat in a booth made of bulletproof glass. The Israeli government was afraid people would try to kill him.

Eichmann was found guilty. He was hanged on May 29, 1962.

Picture taken in 1962 shows Adolf Eichmann in bulletproof booth at his trial in Israel

Eichmann was the head of an office in Germany called the Bureau for the Resettlement of the Jews. At first, Hitler wanted to make all Jews leave Germany.

After the war started, the Nazis couldn't send the Jews away. They decided to kill all of them.

They called this plan the "Final Solution" — or last answer — "to the Jewish Question."

Eichmann was in charge of plans to kill the Jews. He said at his trial he was part of the killing. But he said he wasn't guilty.

He said he was only doing what his bosses told him to do. He was a German and had to obey the head of his country. He said he was only "following orders."

The trial of Eichmann made many people think. What they would do if government officials told them to do something wrong?

A professor said that Eichmann showed "the banality of evil." *Banal* means ordinary.

Some people might think a person who did such bad things would be crazy or mean. But Eichmann seemed very ordinary.

That made people wonder whether other ordinary people could also do terrible things.

Questions

1. Witnesses say that John Demjanjuk was (a) a guard at a concentration camp **(b)** the head of the Bureau for the Resettlement of the Jews **(c)** the first czar of Russia

2. Adolf Eichmann said he was (a) not a Nazi **(b)** only following orders **(c)** guilty

3. The Final Solution was the name the Nazis used to describe (a) killing all the Jews **(b)** starting World War II **(c)** making the Jews leave Germany

Answers

1 (a) 2 (b) 3 (a)

Talking Point

If a government official told you to do something you knew was wrong, would you do it?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

(1)

The Savvy Reader

Parents must keep poisons out of the reach of children. Children who are a year old are poisoned most often.

A person who eats a poison can get very sick. He or she could die. There are other poisons which can be breathed in. They can hurt your lungs. Poisons also hurt a person's eyes or skin.

There are more than 395 Poison Control Centers in the United States. They are open all the time. About 10,000 people call poison control centers every day.

The phone for the Poison Control Center in Philadelphia is **386-2100**.

About 70 percent of calls are about children who haven't started school yet. Even children who are six months old can get poisons.

Parents should know what things are *poisonous*. Some things you clean with are marked with a skull, a skeleton's head. They are poison. Some poisons are marked with a new *symbol*, "Mr. Yuk." A picture of Mr. Yuk is with this article.

But many other things can be poison, even if they don't have a poison symbol on them. Pills can be poison if you take the wrong ones. They can be poison if you take too many.

Children who are a year old get poisoned the most. That's because they can crawl and climb. Sometimes parents don't know how much the child can reach.

When children are two, they try to do what their parents do. So don't clean with poisonous cleaners around them. Don't take your pills in front of them. The children might try to do the same thing.

Children between two and four years old want to know about things that are put away. They will try to find them and eat them. Get all medicine in bottles with *child-resistant caps*. That means the bottle cap is hard for a child to open.

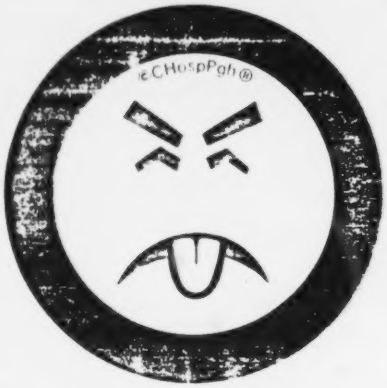
If you have any medicine that is old, or that you never take, flush it down the toilet.

You can't teach a child to not take poison. He or she is too young to learn. You have to watch children so they don't get around poisons. Keep all poisons and pills in cabinets with locks on them.

Put poisonous cleaners in safe places. But don't make them too hard to get to. You might not put them away.

Most children get poisoned when their parents are using a poison. The phone or the doorbell rings, and the parent leaves the child alone. Take your child along with you.

Be careful in other people's homes. Sometimes people who don't have small children will leave poisons out.



Something with "Mr. Yuk" on it is poison

If someone takes a poison by mistake, here is what to do:

If the poison is a medicine, *don't* give the person anything to drink or eat. Call the Poison Control Center and ask what to do.

If the poison is a chemical or a cleaner, give the person milk or water to drink. Then, call the Poison Control Center and ask what to do next.

Don't give anything to drink if the person is unconscious or cannot swallow.

Always keep a one-ounce bottle of *syrup of Ipecac* for each child in the house. (Keep it in a place where the children can't get it.) Syrup of Ipecac makes people throw up. Give it to your child *if* a doctor or the Poison Control Center says to. *Don't* give it unless the doctor tells you to.

Keep the phone number of the Poison Control Center near the phone. It is **386-2100**.

You can get a free card that tells you what to do if a person is poisoned.

Get a postcard and write: "I want a card for Emergency Action for Poisoning." Write your name and address on it.

Send the postcard to: Emergency Action for Poisoning, Communications Department, McNeil Consumer Products Company, Camp Hill Road, Fort Washington, PA. 19034. Don't send a letter.

Questions

1. 386-2100 is the number of (a) Poison Control Center **(b)** McNeil Consumer Products Company **(c)** the drug store.

2. Syrup of Ipecac (a) makes it hard for children to open medicine bottles **(b)** makes you throw up **(c)** shouldn't be given unless a doctor tells you to.

3. True or false: A six-month-old baby can't get poisoned.

Answers

1. (a) 2. (b,c) 3. False

Talking Point

Are all the poisons in your house kept away from children?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

A judge decided yesterday who gets to keep a little girl called Baby M. Two couples were fighting over her. It was a very important case because it was the first one about *surrogate motherhood*.

A judge in New Jersey decided the Baby M case yesterday.

It was a case about a *surrogate mother*. A *surrogate* takes the place of another person.

A *surrogate mother* becomes pregnant with the sperm of a man who is not her husband. She agrees she will give the baby to the father.

About 600 couples in the whole country have used surrogate mothers to have their babies.

In this case, the surrogate mother changed her mind. She wanted to keep Baby M.

But the judge gave Baby M to the father. The judge said Baby M's mother has no right to see her.

The case is important. It is the first time any judge has decided a case about a surrogate mother. Stories on **Page 3** tell about the Baby M case and what it means.

Many people have argued about surrogate mothering. Some say it is like baby-selling. They want to make it illegal. Others say it is a way to help couples that can't have children.

The girl was called Baby M in court papers. That is because the father named her Melissa. The mother named her Sara.

The father is William Stern. He and his wife, Elizabeth Stern, had no children. They are both 41 years old. They live in Tenafly, N.J.

The Sterns wanted a child. But Elizabeth Stern didn't want to become pregnant. She has a disease called multiple sclerosis. She thought that would make it hard to be pregnant.

The mother of Baby M is Mary Beth Whitehead. She lives in Brick Township, N.J.

Whitehead agreed to become pregnant with William Stern's sperm. She signed a contract in 1985 with the Sterns.

The contract said Whitehead promised to give the baby to the Sterns. It said the Sterns agreed to pay her $10,000.

Baby M was born March 27, 1986. Whitehead decided to keep the baby. She took the baby to Florida and hid for 87 days.

Police found her and gave the baby to the Sterns.

William Stern filed a suit in court to keep the child. He said the contract meant the child belonged to him.

Associated Press

Mary Beth Whiteheld holds umbrella over "Baby M" when she visited with her yesterday morning

The trial began Jan. 5 and ended March 12. Superior Court Judge Harvey R. Sorkow heard the case. There was no jury.

The judge spent three weeks making his decision. He read that decision in court yesterday. The Sterns were in the courtroom. Mary Beth Whitehead was not.

The judge said the contract for surrogate mothering was legal. So Baby M belongs to the father. Her new name is Melissa Stern. She was one year old last week.

Judge Sorkow did one thing that nobody expected. He had Elizabeth Stern adopt the child. So both Sterns are now the legal parents of Melissa.

Mary Beth Whitehead still wants her baby. Her lawyer will appeal the judge's decision. That means another judge will decide if Judge Sorkow was right.

New Jersey has no law to cover this kind of case. Judge Sorkow thinks there should be a law. He hopes the state Legislature will make laws to set rules for cases like this one.

Pennsylvania doesn't have any laws about surrogate mothers, either.

But lawmakers are working on the problem.

A story on **Page 3** says that there are *bills* in the *legislature* to deal with surrogate mother contracts. A *bill* is a plan for a law.

One bill would make all contracts for surrogate mothering illegal. Another bill would make it legal but give the mother time to change her mind.

Questions

1. A surrogate mother agrees to become pregnant and give up her baby. True or False.

2. Baby M's new name is (a) Sara Whitehead **(b)** Melissa Stern **(c)** Elizabeth Sorkow.

3. Surrogate mothering is against the law in Pennsylvania. True or False.

Answers

1. True 2. (b) 3. False

Talking Point

Do you think surrogate mothering is a good idea?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

(3)

The Savvy Reader

(4)

The Flyers will play the Edmonton Oilers in the final round of the playoffs for ice hockey's Stanley Cup.

The Flyers are trying to win the Stanley Cup.

The Stanley Cup is a large silver trophy. It goes to the champion team in ice hockey. The cup itself has a strange history.

There is a story about the Flyers on the **Back Page**. The Flyers beat the Montreal Canadiens, 4-3, last night. They will go to the final round of playoffs. The Flyers will play the Edmonton Oilers.

The champion keeps the Stanley Cup for a year.

Montreal won last year. Edmonton won in 1985. The Flyers won it in 1974 and 1975. They lost in the final round three other times.

The Stanley Cup is named for Lord Stanley. His family was part of British royalty. *Lord* was his title.

Lord Stanley was governor general of Canada about 100 years ago. Ice hockey was a new sport then. It started in Canada.

Lord Stanley didn't care about hockey. But his aide and his son liked the sport. They asked him to buy a trophy for the best team.

Lord Stanley agreed. In 1893, he bought a big silver cup. It cost about $50. A team in Montreal won it the first year.

In the early years, *amateur* teams in Canada played for the Stanley Cup. Amateurs don't get paid to play sports. The first *professional* team won in 1912. Pro teams play for money.

Now the cup belongs to the National Hockey League, or NHL.

In 1905, the winning team got drunk. One player kicked the Stanley Cup into a canal on his way home. Fans found the cup the next day. It was dented.

In 1906, the winning team left the cup in a bar. A cleaning lady took it home. She planted flowers in it.

In 1919, there was no champion. The playoff series ended when a player died from the flu.

In 1962, the Stanley Cup was stolen from Chicago Arena. A fan from Montreal was angry that Chicago had it. A policeman stopped him outside and brought the cup back.

The Stanley Cup has the names of every player on every winning team. That's about 90 teams now. So the base of the cup is made bigger every few years to get on new names.

When a team wins the final game, the Stanley Cup is brought onto the ice. Players on both teams shake hands with each other.

Then the winning captain picks up the Stanley Cup. He carries it over his head and skates around the arena. His teammates skate along. This is called the victory lap.

Associated Press

Flyers Scott Mellanby (left) and Ron Sutter celebrate goal last night

■

In 1974, Philadelphia's sports teams were not doing well. So when the Flyers won the Stanley Cup, it was like a holiday.

The Flyers won the final game on May 19. They beat the Boston Bruins, 1-0. It was a Sunday afternoon.

Thousands of people began to celebrate. In South Philadelphia, they came out of their homes. Cars on Broad Street couldn't move. Fans sat on tops of cars. They yelled and drank beer. The party went until late that night.

Later, the city had a big parade for the team.

■

The Stanley Cup finals start Sunday night in Edmonton. The first team that wins four games will be champion of the NHL.

Edmonton is almost 2,800 miles from Philadelphia. It is in western Canada. About 530,000 people live there.

Edmonton is capital of Alberta province. A province in Canada is like a state in the United States.

Questions

1. **Lord Stanley (a)** liked to play hockey **(b)** bought the Stanley Cup **(c)** lives in Philadelphia.

2. **The Flyers won the Stanley Cup in (a) 1919 (b) 1974 (c) 1985.**

3. **The Stanley Cup is the same size as it was in 1893.** True or False.

Answers

1. (b) 2. (b) 3. False

Talking Point

Do you think the Flyers will win the Stanley Cup this year?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

President Reagan is in Italy this week. He is meeting with leaders of six other countries to talk about money.

President Reagan is in Venice, Italy, this week. He is meeting with the leaders of six other countries.

The leaders will talk about money. They will talk about the things that are made in their countries. They also will talk about trade among their countries. It is called an *economic summit*.

A story about the economic summit meeting is on **Page 3**.

The *economy* of a country stands for how people earn money. The meeting is called a *summit* because leaders of their country are getting together. Usually, only assistants go to such meetings. A summit is the very top of a mountain.

The leaders are meeting in a strange, old city. Venice has no cars or buses. In Venice, people ride in boats.

The city is built on about 120 small islands. The main part is about three miles away from the coast — the edge — of Italy. The islands are in a *lagoon*. That is a large, shallow part of the Adriatic Sea. It is in the northeast part of Italy.

People can get to Venice on a train. Or they can drive and park in a large garage near the train station. But there are no trains or cars inside the city.

Venice has 300 canals for the boats. A *canal* is like a small river. Hotels, shops and other large buildings are next to the canals. There are also many alleys and bridges where people can walk.

The *Grand Canal* is two miles long. But many canals are small. Some are only 12 feet wide, and a few feet deep.

Most people travel the canals by motorboat and ferry boat. The ferries are like buses. They have regular stops along the large canals.

There is another way to travel that is slower, but fun. It's in a gondola. A *gondola* is a small, wooden boat. A *gondolier* paddles the gondola. It's like a taxi. Many travelers take a ride in a gondola. But it is very expensive to do that.

Venice began about 1,500 years ago. At first, the city was like a little country. Rich *merchants* lived there. Merchants buy and sell things. The merchants owned boats that carried things to other cities. Artists lived in Venice, too. Venice has many famous paintings and other works of art.

Now the big business in Venice is *tourism*.

Traveling by gondola in Venice

Tourists are people who come to visit from other cities and countries on vacation. They come to ride the boats and see the old buildings.

Venice has many problems. Some people think it is smelly there because garbage gets into the small canals. Floods have caused much damage too.

But Venice can be a very safe place. That's why the meeting is in Venice this week.

Seven countries meet every year to talk about doing business together. They are the United States, West Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Great Britain and Canada.

The countries take turns having the meeting. This year was Italy's turn.

Italy has had many terrorist attacks. Important people have been kidnapped. So the Italians chose Venice for this big meeting. They said it's safer to meet on an island than other places.

The police can check everyone who comes to the island. Travel is slow on the canals, so a terrorist would have a hard time trying to get away.

Questions

1. An economic summit is a meeting to talk about (a) mountains, **(b)** missiles, **(c)** money. (5)

2. Venice is a city with many (a) islands, **(b)** highways, **(c)** skyscrapers, **(d)** canals. (Pick two answers.)

3. A gondola is the fastest way to travel in Venice. True or False.

Answers

1. (c) 2. (a) and (d). 3. False.

Talking Point

How would you like to live in a city where people travel by boat instead of by car and bus?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

In South Africa, blacks observed the June 16 anniversary of the uprising in Soweto by staying home from work.

(9)

Most blacks in South Africa stayed home yesterday.

It was a sad holiday. Black people were remembering what happened 11 years ago.

South Africa stories are on **Pages 20 and 26.**

On June 16, 1976, black children held a protest. They wanted to show they were angry about *apartheid*.

Apartheid is a law that keeps whites and blacks apart in South Africa. Apartheid lets the 5 million white people in South Africa rule over 24 million blacks.

Black Africans don't have many rights. They cannot live or travel where they want. They cannot vote on who leads the nation. Police can stop them from meeting.

The children's protest in 1976 was in Soweto. That is a place where 2,500,000 blacks live.

The name *Soweto* comes from parts of other words: **SO**uth **WE**st **TO**wnship. Soweto Township is southwest of Johannesburg.

Johannesburg is the largest city for white people in South Africa. It has many factories. Gold mines are in the mountains nearby.

Many black people work the factories and mines of Johannesburg.

But blacks cannot live in the city. Apartheid says they must go home to Soweto every night.

Blacks have protested against apartheid in many ways. The 1976 protest was about schools.

The law said all children had to learn *Afrikaans*. That is the language most white people speak in South Africa. Children in Soweto said learning *Afrikaans* made them like slaves to the whites.

Police fired rifles at the children who protested. Two children were killed. Then blacks started rioting.

Riots began in other black towns, too. In 1976 and 1977, blacks and police fought many times. At least 575 people were killed. Most were black Africans who wanted to end apartheid.

Since 1976, blacks have remembered the uprising in Soweto. They have made June 16 into a day for protest. Police tried to stop them.

Last year, just before June 16, the government declared a *state of emergency*. It made new rules to keep blacks from protesting and rioting.

Blacks protested anyway. On June 16, 1986, 11 blacks were killed.

This year, it was quiet in Soweto. Extra police were on patrol. Very few blacks went to work. Stores and offices closed. Trains were almost empty. Buses and taxis didn't run Soweto.

Some blacks who went to work got hurt. They were chased and beaten by other blacks who wanted everyone to stay home.

There is still a *state of emergency* in South Africa. So special rules make it hard to report the news. The rules stop some news from getting out of South Africa.

The rules forbid a reporter from going to see a riot or other trouble. Some things about the police can't be reported. The reporter is supposed to get all news from the government. It's hard to find out if the government is telling the truth.

Reporters get most of the news anyway. But some reporters who don't follow South Africa's rules are forced to leave the country.

So the Daily News prints a special notice at the top of stories from South Africa. It tells the readers that the story meets the government's rules.

Some other countries have special rules for reporters, too. But not the United States.

Associated Press

Members of the Johannesburg Youth Organization at a memorial service yesterday

Questions

1. Soweto is a township for (a) whites (b) blacks (c) reporters.

2. The date of the Soweto uprising was (a) June 16, 1976 (b) June 12, 1986 (c) June 16, 1987.

3. The state of emergency makes it harder to report the news. True or False.

Answers

1. (b) 2. (a) 3. True

Talking Point

What would it be like to live under a state of emergency?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

Julius Erving, the Dr. J of basketball, has been selected as a member of the Fairmount Park Commission.

Julius Erving stopped playing basketball in April. But he has been busy.

He began something new yesterday. He became a member of the Fairmount Park Commission. He is a *commissioner* for the park.

There are stories on **Page 8** and **Page 30** about Dr. J. One story tells what he has done since he retired from basketball.

Sometimes the Park Commission is called the *park board*. That is what the headline means. Dr. J used to play on basketball courts with a *backboard*. Now he will be on the *park board*.

It's not like a regular job. The commissioners don't get paid. They work to help the park.

Commissioners make rules and plans for the park. They decide what to build and fix.

The commissioners meet one time every month. The meetings are at Memorial Hall. That's the big, old building in the park near Belmont Avenue in West Philadelphia.

Commissioners help the park more than one day a month. They meet with people who use the park. They raise money for the park. They study new ideas to make the park better.

Dr. J says he wants to do those things. He said he wants to help people in the city. And he wants to help teen-agers use the park better.

Dr. J talked about those ideas with some judges in the city this week.

The law says that judges in the city will pick 10 commissioners for Fairmount Park. These commissioners all serve a term for five years. The terms started on June 1. They will end on May 31, 1992.

Eight commissioners wanted to stay on the park board. So last month, the judges decided to *re-appoint* them all for another term.

That left two vacancies. Many people applied. They filled out forms about their life. They wrote about their ideas for the park.

A small group of judges talked to each person who applied. These judges were a *nominating committee*. This committee decides who it thinks will do the best job. It *recommends* those choices to all the judges.

The nominating committee decided last month on two people. But then a judge on the committee thought Dr. J would be a good board member. He asked Dr. J to apply.

Dr. J applied this week. The nominating committee changed its mind and recommended him. It also recommended Rosanne Pauciello from South Philadelphia.

Julius Erving: new park commissioner

All the judges met yesterday. They voted in secret on six people for the park board. Pauciello and Dr. J finished at the top. So they are the new commissioners.

The Fairmount Park Commission has 16 members. The judges pick 10.

The law says the other six commissioners are from city government. They are called *ex officio* members. Those are Latin words that mean *from office*. People who hold certain city offices are always on the commission.

Here are the *ex officio* members. The mayor. President of City Council. The recreation commissioner. Commissioner of the Water Department. The commissioner of public property. The chief engineer in the Streets Department.

The story on **Page 8** says that James McPhillips used to be chief engineer. He was an ex-officio commissioner for 24 years. He is retired and wants to be on the park board again. But the judges decided against him.

Some people were angry about that. They said that a person who lives in Northeast Philadelphia should be on the board. McPhillips lives in the Northeast. Fairmount Park has a lot of land in the Northeast. But no commissioners live there.

Questions

1. Dr. J will help to make rules for Fairmount Park. True or False.

2. Dr. J was appointed by (a) judges (b) other commissioners (c) the mayor.

3. The Fairmount Park Commission has (a) six (b) eight (c) 16 members.

Answers

1. True 2. (a) 3. (c)

Talking Point

What do you think Julius Erving should do to help Fairmount Park?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

(7)

The Savvy Reader

Theaters on Broadway in New York City turned out their lights yesterday for one minute in honor of director Michael Bennett.

A famous director died yesterday. His name was Michael Bennett. He was the creator of a play called "A Chorus Line."

Bennett died from *lymphoma*, a kind of cancer. The lymphoma was caused by AIDS.

A story on **Page 6** reports on the life and death of Michael Bennett.

There are many theaters in the United States. The most important ones are in New York City.

Many big theaters in New York are near a street called Broadway. Not all of them are on Broadway itself. But they are close to each other. So they are called "Broadway" theaters.

When a play is performed in one of these theaters, it is "on Broadway." It is called a "Broadway show."

The theaters have many bright lights outside. Sometimes the area is called the Great White Way.

Last night, the theaters on Broadway turned out their lights for one minute. They did it to honor Michael Bennett.

It costs a lot of money to have a play in a Broadway theater. The most important playwrights — the people who write plays — have their plays performed on Broadway.

New York City has smaller theaters, too. Some plays there don't cost too much to perform. The small theaters also have plays that are different from the usual kind of plays. These theaters are called "off-Broadway."

Michael Bennett started out as a dancer on Broadway. He danced in the *chorus* of many important Broadway *musicals*.

A musical is a play that tells a story with both talking and singing. It usually has a lot of dancing, too.

People in the dance chorus usually do not say anything on stage. They just dance together.

After a while, Bennett became a *choreographer*. He made up the dances for musicals. He showed dancers in the chorus line how to do them. *Choreography* comes from a Greek word, *khoros*, which means dance.

A dancer for a musical is chosen at an *audition*. Dancers in New York go to many auditions. At each audition, the dancer shows how he or she can dance. He or she also answers questions by the director.

Michael Bennett saw many things when he was *auditioning* for chorus lines. He met many people. It gave him an idea for a Broadway musical.

Chorus line performs "A Chorus Line"

He called the musical "A Chorus Line."

It was a play about an audition. In the play, dancers tried out for parts in the chorus. The dancers told the stories of their lives while they tried out.

"A Chorus Line" was different from other Broadway musicals. Musicals usually have a lot of scenery. The actors in a musical change their costumes a lot.

"A Chorus Line" didn't have any scenery. The actors didn't change costumes.

"A Chorus Line" *opened* at the Shubert Theater on Broadway in July 1975. It is still being performed there. It has been performed on Broadway longer than any other musical.

A play stays on Broadway as long as people still come to see it. Some plays on Broadway "close" — stop being performed — after only one night.

"A Chorus Line" made Michael Bennett famous. After he earned a lot of money, he bought a theater. He wanted to give other people a chance to try out their new plays.

Bennett directed other plays, too. His last big Broadway play was "Dreamgirls." It didn't have much dancing in it.

A few years ago, "A Chorus Line" was also made into a movie.

Questions

1. **A choreographer** (a) directs plays (b) dances in a chorus (c) makes up dances that are performed on stage.

2. **"A Chorus Line"** (a) closed after one night (b) is the longest running musical in Broadway history (c) opened off-Broadway.

3. **Dancers try out for musicals** (a) in workshops (b) at auditions (c) by writing letters.

Answers

1 (c) 2 (b) 3 (b)

Talking Point

Did you ever see the movie or play of "A Chorus Line"?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

Oliver North began to tell Congress yesterday what he knew about the sale of arms to Iran.

Many people watched the *Iran-Contra* hearings in Congress on television yesterday. That is because Oliver North began to tell his story.

Stories that start on **Page 3** report on Oliver North and the Iran-Contra hearings.

North is a lieutenant colonel (pronounced *Loo-TEN-ant KER-nel*) in the U.S. Marines. It's written Lt. Col. for short. Marine officers are ranked as lieutenant, captain, major, lieutenant colonel, colonel and general.

North worked for the National Security Council. The NSC is a group that helps the president decide what to do. North was fired from his National Security Council job in November but he's still in the Marines.

The Iran-Contra hearings began two months ago. Congress is trying to find out about the sale of arms (guns and bombs) to the country of Iran.

Some people say that arms were sold to Iran so Iran would help free American hostages held in the Middle East. Others say the arms were sold to make friends with people in Iran who are against the leaders there.

In buying the arms, Iran paid a lot more money than the arms cost.

Some of this money went to buy arms for the Contras in Nicaragua. The Contras are soldiers who are against the leaders of Nicaragua.

During the hearings, sending money to Nicaragua has been called a *diversion*. Diversion means turning something away from where it is supposed to go.

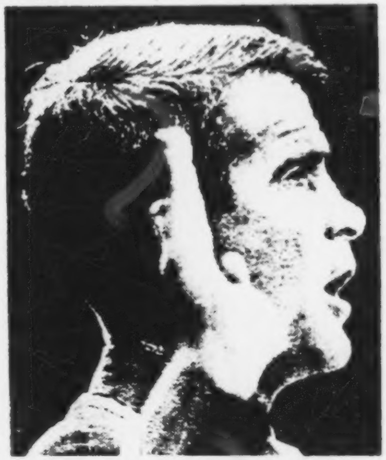
This is important because Congress had passed a law saying the American government should not give arms to the Contras. The law is the Boland Amendment. It is named for Congressman Edward Boland, who sponsored it.

If President Reagan knew about money diverted to the Contras, he would be breaking the law. Anyone in government who sent Iran's money to the Contras might have broken the law.

Reagan has said he wants to help the Contras. He thinks the government in Nicaragua wants to hurt the United States. But he says he didn't know anything about money diverted for the Contras.

Many people were watching yesterday to see what North said about Reagan. North said that he used to think the president knew about the diversion of money.

But North said he never told the president about it. He said the president later told him he didn't know anything about money for the Contras.



Associated Press

Oliver North swears to tell the truth

North did not want to testify before the committee. Before yesterday, he "took" the Fifth Amendment.

The Fifth Amendment to the Constitution says a person can't be forced to testify against himself. His words can't be used to convict him of a crime.

But members of Congress wanted to hear testimony from North. So they granted him *use immunity*.

Immunity means you can't be prosecuted for a crime you talk about. A person who is granted immunity by Congress must tell what he knows. If he refuses, he could go to jail.

Use immunity is different. You *can* be put on trial. Your own testimony cannot be used to convict you. But other people and evidence can be used against you.

So, North is testifying to Congress this week with *use immunity*. But he may still be in trouble later on.

Questions

1. Lt. Col. stands for (a) lieutenant; **(b) brigadier** general; **(c)** captain; **(d)** lieutenant **colonel.**

2. The Contras are (a) soldiers against the **government** in Nicaragua, **(b)** people against **the** government in Iran, **(c)** members of Congress.

3. "Diversion" in the Iran-Contra hearings means (a) selling arms to Iran; **(b)** lying to Congress; **(c)** taking money from arms sales to Iran and giving the money to the Contras.

Answers

1. (d) 2. (a) 3. (c)

Talking Point

Do you think Lt. Col. Oliver North is telling the truth?

■

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The Savvy Reader

"The shore" is what people in Philadelphia call all the towns in New Jersey that touch the Atlantic Ocean.

This is vacation time.

Many people from Philadelphia go to the shore to relax. They like to sit on the beach.

"The shore" is what we call all the towns in New Jersey that touch the Atlantic Ocean.

At the beach, we are close to nature. Here are some things that happen all around us at the beach:

Waves are caused by the wind. The wind pushes at the water. That makes the water rise and fall. The wave moves across the ocean.

Strong wind makes the waves higher.

Near the shore, the water is shallow. So the wave moves against the bottom. That forces the top of the wave to rise.

At the beach, the wave tips over. We say that the wave *breaks*. Waves are sometimes called *breakers*.

The tide. The level of the ocean rises and falls every day. Each day has two high tides and two low tides.

Today's high and low tides for Cape May, N.J., are on **Page 10**. Look for the headline "Tides."

Each high and low tide comes about 45 minutes later than the day before. The tides rise and fall about four to eight feet at the shore.

The moon causes tides. It pulls at the water in the oceans. This pull is called *gravity*.

The pull is strongest where the moon is closest to the earth. That makes a bulge in the water. It also makes the water lower in other places.

The sand. The beach is made up of tiny pieces of rock.

Sand comes from the land. It comes from the soil and mountains. Pieces break off. They are washed down rivers to the ocean. Most sand at the shore is *quartz*. That is a clear mineral.

Sand also can be broken-up shells from clams or coral. But hardly any sand at the shore comes from shells.

The Water. We all know that ocean water tastes salty. The salt comes from the land. It washes out of soil and rocks. It flows to sea in the rivers.

Salt dissolves in the ocean. It breaks up into tiny pieces that can't be seen.

There are many kinds of salt in the ocean. Some is like the salt on your kitchen table. But there are other salts too. There are even gold salts in ocean water.

A typical shore scene

If you let ocean water dry up, you will see small crystals of salt.

But salt doesn't affect the color of the ocean. The color depends on tiny plants in the water.

In the spring and early summer, water at the shore looks green. That is because the tiny plants are blooming. Then the water seems to turn blue. That is because the plants have died

Erosion. The beach is always changing. The ocean carries sand from one place to another. When sand is carried away, we say that the beach *erodes*.

The tides and wind cause erosion. There is more erosion during a storm. It also is heavy in the winter time. That's because the wind blows harder and the tide is higher.

At the South Jersey shore, the ocean carries sand from north to south. Some towns are losing parts of their beach. Ocean City, Avalon and Cape May have that problem

Questions

1. **High tide happens (a)** three times a day **(b)** at the same time every day **(c)** a little later than yesterday.
2. **Salt comes from (a)** rocks on the ocean floor **(b)** the land **(c)** broken shells.
3. **Tiny plants give** ocean water its color. True or False.

Answers

1. (c) 2. (b) 3. True

Talking Point

What do you like about going to the beach?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

Marcus Garvey and Samuel Mudd, who both died long ago, have something in common. People are fighting to clear their names.

Two men who who have been dead for many years are back in the news this summer.

Marcus Garvey was a leader of black people about 70 years ago. He believed in black pride. He wanted blacks to return to Africa.

Samuel Mudd was a doctor. He treated the man who killed President Lincoln in 1865.

The lives of these men were very different. But they have something in common.

Both men were convicted of crimes. Many people think they were innocent. Admirers are still trying to clear their names.

Here are the stories of these two men:

■

Marcus Garvey was born in 1887 in Jamaica. He came to the United States in 1916.

Garvey believed blacks should help themselves. He wanted them to start businesses. He said blacks should be proud of themselves.

He started a group to help other blacks. It was called the Universal Negro Improvement Association. It had 4 million members.

Garvey tried to start a steamship company. He wanted to have ships to take black people from the United States to Caribbean islands and Africa. He sold shares for $5 each. He said the shipping business would make a lot of money. But it failed.

Some men in the U.S. government were afraid of Garvey. They said he was getting black people together to make trouble. They wanted a reason to arrest him.

A young lawyer named J. Edgar Hoover worked on the case. He was an assistant U.S. attorney. Later, Hoover was director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI.

Finally, Garvey was charged with mail fraud. Hoover said Garvey made false promises about his steamship company. It is against the law to send false promises in the U.S. mail.

A jury in New York found Garvey guilty in 1923. He went to prison.

A few years later, Garvey was sent back to Jamaica. Then he moved to London, England. He died in London in 1940.

Blacks in the United States, Jamaica and Africa still admire Garvey. They believe he had good ideas. They think Garvey was punished for his ideas. They want the government to say it was wrong about Garvey.

Mudd

Garvey

There is a bill in Congress about Garvey. It says that Garvey committed no crimes. If the bill passes, Garvey would be *exonerated*, or cleared of any charges.

Rep. Charles Rangel of Harlem sponsored the bill. Garvey worked in Harlem in New York City. The bill may not pass soon. But Rangel will keep trying to clear Garvey's name.

■

Dr. Samuel Mudd wasn't punished for his ideas. He just helped the wrong man.

On April 14, 1865, President Lincoln was shot to death. The killer was John Wilkes Booth. Booth broke his leg as he escaped. He went to Mudd's house. Mudd set Booth's leg.

Mudd didn't know that Booth had shot Lincoln. He had nothing to do with the killing. But Americans wanted to punish everyone involved. Mudd was put on trial.

Mudd was convicted of helping Booth after the murder. He was sent to prison at Fort Jefferson, on an island near Key West, Fla.

Mudd was *pardoned* four years later. That means he didn't serve any more time in prison. But he was still considered guilty.

Mudd died in 1883. His grandson, Richard Mudd, has worked to clear his grandfather's name. He wants Congress to pass a bill that says Samuel Mudd did not commit any crime.

Richard Mudd is going to Fort Jefferson this week. His family is with him. The prison is gone. A new sign there tells about Dr. Mudd.

Richard Mudd has been to the island before. He is 86 years old. This is his last trip. He wants his children and grandchildren to keep working to clear the family's name.

(11)

Questions

1. **Marcus Garvey (a)** was a native American, **(b)** believed in black power and black pride, **(c)** got rich in the steamship business.

2. **Samuel Mudd (a)** killed President Lincoln, **(b)** lived in Key West, **(c)** fixed a broken leg for Lincoln's killer.

Answers

1. (b) 2. (c)

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

Two judges and a former judge were in trouble yesterday. One was found guilty of taking money. The others were charged with taking money to do favors.

Three judges in Philadelphia were in bad trouble with the law yesterday.

A Municipal Court judge was found guilty of corruption. He is Judge Mario Driggs.

Two men who have been common pleas judges were charged with serious crimes. They are Judge Kenneth S. Harris and former Senior Judge Thomas N. Shiomos.

Stories about their cases begin on **Page 3.**

The stories use many terms about the city courts. Here are what those terms mean.

First, there are two kinds of criminal cases.

- A *felony* is a serious crime. Murder, rape, robbery or a shooting is a felony.
- A *misdemeanor* is less serious. It is a crime with a jail term no longer than five years.

Common Pleas Court is where trials are held for people charged with *felonies*.

Common Pleas has some trials for misdemeanors. It also hears *civil cases*, disputes in which no crime was committed. It hears family disputes about divorce and custody. It also tries crimes involving young people under 18.

Felony waiver. Judge Harris worked in the *felony waiver* part of Common Pleas Court.

That means he heard criminal cases with no jury. He alone decided whether the defendant was guilty or innocent.

The Constitution says any person charged with a crime can have a trial by jury. But some defendants *waive* that right. They give it up. They want the judge to decide the case. These are often drug cases, car thefts and burglaries.

Senior judge. Shiomos was a senior judge. He had retired from full-time work. He tried cases only when the State Supreme Court asked him. He also tried *felony waiver* cases.

Shiomos is not a judge anymore. He resigned this year after he got in trouble with the law.

The personal. Each judge in Philadelphia has a personal aide. They're called *personals*.

The personal does whatever the judge wants. He can take care of the judge's schedule. He checks with lawyers and defendants to see if they are ready. He runs errands for the judge.

Judge Harris' personal aide was charged with crimes yesterday.

The robing room. The FBI hid a camera and microphones in Judge Harris' robing room. The story says the FBI has pictures and recordings of Harris asking people for money.

A robing room is next to a courtroom. It's usually small and not so fancy. It may have a table and chair, a phone and a sink.

The judge goes to the robing room to put on his black robe before going into court.

Themis: the goddess of justice

When a judge wants to see lawyers "in chambers," he usually means the robing room. In City Hall, many judges have offices far away from their courtroom.

Municipal Court. This is the city's lowest court. Its judges have many jobs. Judge Driggs was on the Municipal Court.

Municipal Court judges try anyone charged with a *misdemeanor*. There is no jury in these trials. If the verdict is guilty, the defendant gets another trial in Common Pleas Court.

Municipal Court judges handle ***preliminary hearings***. ***Preliminary*** means that it happens before anything else.

Anyone charged with a felony has this hearing within 10 days. The judge decides if there is enough evidence for a trial. He sets a trial date. Or he can *discharge*, throw out, the case.

Municipal Court judges used to set bail. Not any more. Bail is set by bail commissioners.

Public Defenders. They are lawyers for poor people. When a defendant cannot afford to hire his own lawyer, a judge or other court officer appoints a defender.

About 115 lawyers work for the Defender Association of Philadelphia. Their title is assistant defenders. In some cities, their work is called *legal aid*. Money to pay public defenders comes from the city and from other governments.

Questions

1. A felony waiver judge (a) hears jury trials, **(b)** works in Traffic Court, **(c)** has no jury.

2. Municipal Court judges (a) try murder cases, **(b)** hold preliminary hearings, **(c)** set bail.

3. The robing room is where a judge can meet privately with lawyers. True or False.

Answers

1. (c) 2. (b) 3. True

Talking Point

Do you think most judges are honest?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

Robert Bork is President Reagan's nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court. He is strongly conservative.

Americans have been arguing about a man named Robert H. Bork.

President Reagan wants Bork to become a justice of the United States Supreme Court.

A story on **Page 6** tells about groups in Pennsylvania who disagree about Bork.

In June, Justice Lewis F. Powell retired from the Supreme Court.

The Constitution gives the president the right to name a new justice. The Constitution also says that the U.S. Senate must agree.

On July 1, President Reagan *nominated* Bork. Bork is 60 years old. He a judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals. An appeals court hears cases before they go to the Supreme Court.

The Senate will make the final decision on Bork. Later this fall, it will vote on whether to *confirm* Bork. Bork will join the court if more than half the senators vote for him.

The first step is hearings. The hearings begin Sept. 15. They will be held by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Sen. Arlen Specter is on the committee. He is a Republican. He lives in Philadelphia.

Sometimes Specter votes for the president's nominees. Sometimes he votes against them. No one is sure how Specter will vote on Bork.

The story on **Page 6** says people are telling Specter what they think. He is getting plenty of mail and phone calls about Bork.

Sen. H. John Heinz 3rd from Pittsburgh also gets a lot of mail on Bork. He hasn't said how he'll vote, either.

The hearings on Bork may be different from other hearings to confirm a Supreme Court justice.

Most of the time, hearings are held to see if a nominee is qualified. Senators ask the nominee about his work, his health and his education.

That's not a question with Bork. Most people agree he is a smart lawyer.

This time, the hearings will be about the nominee's ideas.

Judge Bork is a conservative. A conservative usually likes things the way they are. He doesn't want to make big changes.

Bork doesn't believe the court should make big changes. He thinks the Supreme Court has been making new laws. He believes that is not the court's job.

The way a judge looks at the law is called his *philosophy* (fil-AH-so-fee). Many people agree with Bork's philosophy. Others do not.

Many black groups are against Bork. That is because he once said he was against some civil rights laws.

Robert Bork: hearings begin Sept. 15

Many women's groups are against Bork. He has said the Supreme Court was wrong when it gave women the right to choose an abortion.

Many gay groups are against Bork. They think he is against rights for homosexuals.

All these groups want to keep Bork off the Supreme Court.

People who are against abortion are for Bork. People who want prayer in schools also want Bork on the court.

Both sides are trying to get senators to vote the way they want. They have put ads in the newspapers. They want voters to write or call their senators. Many groups have been demonstrating for or against Bork.

The court's eight other justices have been divided on many issues. Most people believe Bork will cast the deciding vote in cases where the court is split.

Questions

1. Robert Bork is (a) a Supreme Court justice **(b)** an appeals court judge **(c)** a senator.

2. Sen. Arlen Specter is **(a)** a member of the Judiciary Committee **(b)** a senator from New Jersey **(c)** certain to vote for Bork.

3. Bork is supported by groups that (a) work for gay rights **(b)** want to outlaw abortion **(c)** believe the courts should make big changes in the law.

Answers

1. (b) 2. (a) 3. (b)

Talking Point

How do you feel about the nomination of Robert Bork?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

(13)

The Savvy Reader

This month an effort is being made to teach people the facts about domestic violence and how many women are victims of it.

(14)

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

It is a time to let women know that they do not have to be beaten by their husbands or boyfriends.

Domestic refers to things at home. *Violence* is when someone is hurt.

Most victims of domestic violence are women. Victims are people who are hurt or abused.

Abuse means to hurt someone. A person abuses someone else if he hits or punches or kicks them. It is abuse if someone is pushed or shaken or bitten.

There are many *myths* about domestic violence. Myths are ideas that many people believe but that are not true.

MYTH: Only a few women are abused by their mates.

TRUTH: Millions of women are abused by their mates. In Philadelphia, about 45,000 women are abused by their husbands or boyfriends each year.

MYTH: Only poor or black women are abused.

TRUTH: All kinds of women are abused.

Many times, a man says he hit his wife or girlfriend because she did something wrong. A man says the woman spent too much money, or didn't take good care of the children.

Many times, a woman tries to do things better so her husband won't abuse her. But this almost never works. That is because the abuser is the one with the problem. He will find an excuse to abuse his mate.

This is wrong. *No one has the right to hurt anyone else.*

It is against the law for a person to abuse a mate.

Many women stay with husbands who beat them. Why? It is not because they like to be beaten.

Many of these women love their husbands. The husband says he is sorry. He says he will not beat his wife again.

This is almost never true. If a man has hit his mate a few times, he probably will do it again.

Some women are afraid to leave their mates. They are afraid the men will hurt them more.

Many women don't have enough money to live alone. They think they don't have enough education to get good jobs.

Actress Farrah Fawcett portrayed a battered wife in a 1984 television drama

After a lot of abuse, some victims start to believe that they are wrong. They believe nothing can be done.

But this is another myth. With help, a woman can get away from a man who abuses her.

It is very bad for children to see their mothers being abused. This can cause trouble in school. It can cause the child to act up.

It is important for adults and children to get away from abuse. But first, women must admit that it is happening.

Many women try to hide the fact that they are being abused. They make up stories to explain why they are hurt.

Sometimes a woman will tell herself that the man really didn't mean to hurt her.

Once a woman has admitted that she is being abused, she can change things.

If you are being abused, you can get help. Here are phone numbers to call for help:

Women Against Abuse: **386-7777.**

For women who speak Spanish: **235-9992.**

There will be a special event today. Some women who have been beaten will talk about their lives.

The meeting will be at the Friends Meeting House, 4th and Arch streets. It is from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Anyone can come and listen.

Questions

1. **Most women who are abused did something wrong to cause it.** True or False?
2. **Just as many men get beaten by their mates as women.** True or False?
3. **Only poor women are abused.** True or False?

Answers

All three statements are false

Talking Point

Are you being abused?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

In western Texas, a little girl is trapped below the ground in a well pipe she fell into. Rescuers are trying to reach her.

A little girl fell into an old well Wednesday.

The girl's name is Jessica McClure. She is 18 months old. She lives in Midland. The city is in western Texas.

Jessica is still alive. Workers are trying to save her. They are drilling a deep hole in the rock. The hole is next to the well.

A story about the rescue is on **Page 3.**

The well is in Jessica's back yard. Nobody uses it anymore. The well doesn't have any water in it. The opening had been covered with a pot. Someone took the pot away.

Jessica fell 22 feet down into the well pipe. She has been crying and sleeping. The workers are glad when she cries. That means she is alive. [illegible]

People all over the United States are praying for Jessica. TV cameras are in her yard. The rescue is on all of the news shows.

The story of Jessica reminds many older people about a sad story 38 years ago.

This was the time another little girl fell down a well.

It happened April 8, 1949.

The girl's name was Kathy Fiscus. She was 3 years old. She lived in San Marino, Calif. San Marino is near Los Angeles.

Kathy was running and playing. She fell into an old well.

The opening of the well was covered with weeds. People didn't use the well to get water anymore. They had forgotten the well was there.

The little girl fell 100 feet down the pipe. The pipe was 14 inches wide.

For an hour, Kathy screamed. Then no sound was heard.

No one knew if Kathy was alive or dead.

A crew of men started digging. They wanted to rescue Kathy. Thousands of people came to watch as they worked.

TV was new in those days. People got their news from newspapers and radio. Most TV programs came from inside the TV studios.

But one TV station did an unusual thing. It sent a camera crew and reporter to cover the story of Kathy Fiscus.

The station was KTLA-TV. It was the first TV station in Los Angeles. Its programs were all in black and white. There was no color TV then.

Kathy Fiscus fell down a well in 1949

KTLA broadcast the story for 27½ hours in a row. Thousands of people in the city watched every minute.

It was the first time so many people had watched a story on TV as it happened.

The rescue digging was on TV only in Los Angeles. Most TV shows didn't go to other cities. People across the United States heard about Kathy on the radio. They read about Kathy in newspapers.

Americans prayed for Kathy. They sent ideas on how to rescue her.

Crews kept digging at the well. They dug for more than two days.

After 52 hours, the workers found Kathy. She was dead.

There was some water in the old well. She had drowned a few hours after her fall. All across America, people cried for Kathy as if she were their own daughter.

Questions

1. Jessica's home town is in (a) Pennsylvania, **(b)** California, **(c)** Texas.

2. Another little girl fell into a well in 1949 near Los Angeles. Answer True or False.

3. Workers who tried to save Kathy Fiscus were on TV in (a) Los Angeles, **(b)** the whole nation, **(c)** no place.

Answers

1. (c) 2. True 3. (a)

Talking Point

Can you remember a news story on TV that made you very sad?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

At 2 o'clock Sunday morning, we turn our clocks back an hour. This is to change over from daylight-saving time to Eastern Standard Time.

Daylight-saving time ends this weekend. At 2 a.m. Sunday, we set our clocks back one hour. It becomes 1 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.

Daylight-saving time will start again in April. At 2 a.m. on the first Sunday in April, we will change the time to 3 a.m.

We change the time at 2 a.m. on Sundays because most people are asleep then, and they won't be confused when it happens.

But some people are awake. A few are at work. It will mean a long night for them.

Most of us work eight hours a day. But people on the job early this Sunday will work nine hours for the day.

Police officers and firefighters are working then. Doctors and nurses and hospital workers are on the job too. Disc jockeys at radio stations will stay on the air an extra hour.

In the spring, all of the people in those jobs can work a *short* day.

That's because we will move the clocks ahead one hour. When we change to daylight-saving time in the spring, the hour from 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. will take no time at all!

Late tomorrow night, other people are affected by the change.

They are the people in bars and taverns.

Bars and taverns cannot serve alcohol after 2 a.m. That's the law in Pennsylvania.

But what about this Saturday night?

The bars can stay open an extra hour. That's because at 2 a.m. daylight time Sunday, it becomes 1 a.m. standard time.

■

Here is why our time is called *standard time*:

A standard is something that people agree to. Standard time means we agree what time it is.

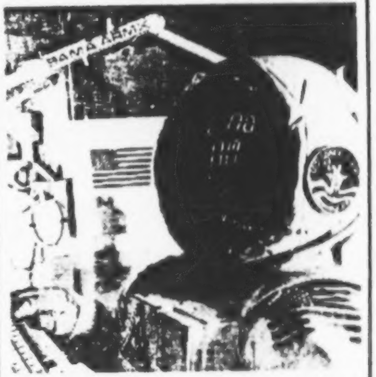
That sounds simple. But long ago, people couldn't agree on the exact time. Standard time is not a very old idea.

About 100 years ago, the railroads had a problem. People in different cities each had their own time. Schedules were a mess.

In 1883, the railroads divided the United States into four parts, called *zones*. Everyone in a zone used the same exact time. There was a one-hour difference between each time zone.

We live in the Eastern part of the United States. This part is in the Eastern time zone.

Eastern Standard Time means everyone in this time zone agrees it's the same time.



Associated Press

A trainee at the U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala., is wearing spacewalk equipment that reflects the magic hour when daylight-saving time begins on Sunday morning.

Congress made standard time the law in 1918. Almost everybody was using standard time anyway. The same law started daylight-saving time.

Daylight-saving time doesn't save any daylight, of course.

It's dark an hour longer in the morning. Most of us are still asleep then. Sunset is an hour later too. That saves energy. We turn on the lights later. Kids can play outside later.

Here's a trick to remember how to move your clock:

Spring forward.
Fall back.

That means in the *spring*, we move the clocks *forward* one hour for daylight time. In the *fall*, we move the clocks *back* one hour for standard time.

This Saturday night/Sunday morning, we can get an extra hour of sleep. In the spring, we'll lose that hour of sleep.

Questions

1. **Today, Philadelphia is on** (a) Eastern Standard Time, (b) Eastern Daylight Time, (c) Central Daylight Time, (d) Mountain Standard Time.

2. **When was standard time invented?** (a) Thousands of years ago, (b) in the time of Julius Caesar, (c) about 100 years ago.

3. **What month does daylight saving time begin each year?** (a) April, (b) October, (c) January, (d) February.

Answers

1 (b) 2 (c) 3 (a)

Talking Point

Have you been at work when the time changed between daylight and standard time?

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

'Acid rain' is what we call pollution that falls with the rain. It can hurt people, animals and things. People are trying to protect us and the animals.

Rain can be bad for you. It can hurt your health. It can damage your property. It can hurt the *environment.*

This is rain that has acid in it. It is called *acid rain.*

The *environment* is the world around us. It includes the waterways, the air, the earth, the animals and other life on it. Hurting the environment hurts people because people are part of the environment, too.

Acid rain worries people called *environmentalists.* They work to help keep the environment clean and safe. They do this by telling people of the dangers to it. They try to get governments to pass laws to protect the environment.

Many of these people belong to organizations. One is the National Audubon Society. It is named after James J. Audubon. He was a famous *naturalist.* A naturalist is like an environmentalist. Naturalists study *nature* and work to keep it safe.

The Audubon Society made a report about acid rain this week. The report says that rain in New Jersey has a lot of acid in it. It said New Jersey is one of the worst states in the country for acid rain.

Too much acid in rain can blister paint on buildings. It can hurt old people. It can hurt people with lung problems. It can get in the water supply.

Acid rain comes from pollution. Most pollution is caused by things burning. Some pollution comes from auto exhaust. That's from burning gasoline. Other pollution comes from factory smokestacks; they burn fuel, such as gas, oil and coal.

This polluted smoke goes into the air. Chemicals in the smoke mix with *condensation* — water suspended in the air. The mixture turns into different kinds of acid. The acids get into the rain as it falls.

The smoke can be carried over thousands of miles. Some acid rain in New Jersey is caused by smoke in the Midwest. The power plants there burn coal. Burning coal causes *sulfuric acid* to get in the rain. Other kinds of burning cause *nitric acid* to get in the rain.

Acid rain gets into the ground. It gets into lakes and streams. Animals and fish drink this acidic water.

New Jersey is an industrial state. That means it has many factories and oil refineries that send out smoke. New Jersey also gets pollution from states around it. These include New York and Pennsylvania.

Smokestacks pour chemicals into the air

The government of Canada is angry at the United States because of acid rain. Canadians say most of the pollution in Canada comes from the United States.

Environmentalists want the United States to act. They want the government to pass laws to stop pollution. That means businesses have to stop polluting the air. People would have to drive cars that don't pollute.

The government asked a group of people to study the problem. The group was called a *task force.* That means they had a task, or job, to do.

The task force said the problem is not very serious. It said the acid already is in the ground and water. It said it won't get any worse.

Scientists said the task force doesn't know what it's talking about. But its report means the government probably won't do much about acid rain. At least, not until it gets worse.

Questions:

1. Environmentalists are people who (a) pollute the air **(b)** protect the environment **(c)** pass government regulations

2. Most pollution is caused by (a) burning **(b)** acid rain **(c)** government regulations

3. The government of Canada blames the United States for much of its pollution. True or False.

Answers:

1 (b) 2 (a) 3 True

Talking Point:

Should the government make rules to stop businesses and people from causing acid rain?

■

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

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The Savvy Reader

Cardinal John Krol is retiring, and Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua will take over as the new leader of Catholics in Philadelphia.

Roman Catholics in Philadelphia will have a new leader soon.

He is Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua. He is from Pittsburgh. He is 64 years old.

He will replace Cardinal John Krol. Cardinal Krol is retiring. He has been the leader of Catholics here since 1961.

Krol is in charge of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. He is called the archbishop.

The change takes place on February 11. Then Bishop Bevilacqua becomes the archbishop.

The change was announced yesterday. Stories begin on **Page 5**. There are more stories throughout the paper.

The stories use many special words. These are words about the Roman Catholic Church. Here is what they mean.

■ Pope: The Pope is the leader of all Roman Catholics in the world.

His name is Pope John Paul II. He is from Poland. Before he became a pope, his name was Cardinal Karol Wojtyla. Popes always take a new name.

Catholics believe that Simon Peter was the first pope. He was one of the 12 Apostles of Jesus. The word pope comes from the Latin word *papa*. It means father.

The pope lives and works in Vatican City. It also is called the Vatican. The Vatican is inside the city of Rome, in Italy. But it is a country.

■ Apostolic delegate: He is the pope's ambassador. The pope sends people to represent him in many countries. The Vatican has an embassy in Washington D.C.

■ Cardinal: The pope chooses cardinals to help him. When a pope dies, the cardinals meet in the Vatican to elect a new pope.

A cardinal wears red. But no one is sure why they are called cardinals. It's not because they wear red gowns.

■ Archbishop: An archbishop is leader of an archdiocese. An archdiocese is a large area where many Catholics live.

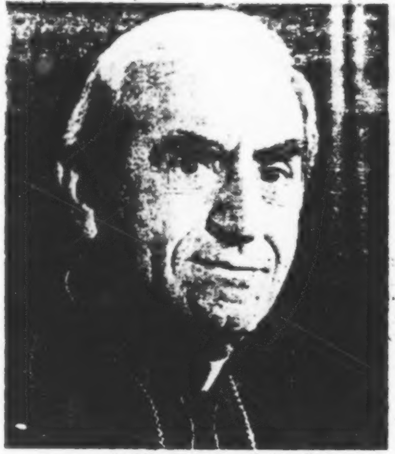
The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has five counties. They are Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties.

About 1,350,000 Catholics live in the archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Many archbishops become cardinals later on. But not all of them.

■ Bishop: A bishop is leader of a diocese. A diocese is an area that is smaller than an archdiocese.

Bishop Bevilacqua has been the bishop of Pittsburgh. That is a diocese. About 900,000 Catholics live in that diocese.



Staff Photography by G. Loie Grossmann

Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua: of Pittsburgh

■ Cardinal Krol: He is 77 years old. He was born in Cleveland. His parents were from Poland. He studied to be a lawyer in the church. Church law is called *canon law*.

The pope decided to make him the leader in Philadelphia in 1960. He came to Philadelphia in 1961. He was an archbishop then.

Six years later, the pope made Krol a cardinal.

Cardinal Krol is an important man in the Catholic Church. He is a good friend of Pope John Paul II. The pope is from Poland, just like the cardinal's family. The pope gets advice from the cardinal.

The pope wants archbishops to retire at age 75. For Cardinal Krol, that was two years ago. But the pope kept him in the job a little longer.

Last summer, Cardinal Krol got sick. That may be why he is finally retiring. But he will be a cardinal all of his life. And the pope will give him some new jobs to help the church.

Questions:

1. Anthony J. Bevilacqua is (a) a cardinal (b) the new leader of Catholics in Philadelphia (c) from Cleveland.

2. Cardinal Krol lives in (a) the Vatican **(b) Pittsburgh (c) Philadelphia.**

3. Catholics believe the first pope was (a) Simon Peter **(b)** Karol Wojtyla **(c)** John Paul I.

Answers:

1. (b) 2. (c) 3. (a)

Talking Point:

What do you think the new archbishop will do in Philadelphia?

■

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The Savvy Reader

Gary Hart is running for president again. He had dropped out after stories about his private life. This may make him eligible for money to pay his old campaign debts.

Gary Hart is running for president again.

It's a big surprise.

Hart dropped out of the race on May 8. Stories about his private life forced him out. Now he has changed his mind.

Stories about Gary Hart begin on **Page 3.**

■

Gary Hart was a senator from Colorado for 12 years. He left the Senate last year to run for president. He is a member of the Democratic Party.

Hart ran for president in 1984. The Democrats chose another man as their candidate. That was Walter Mondale.

Hart decided to run again in 1988. He was the best-known candidate. He was leading in the polls. Polls tell what people think about candidates.

But there were many stories about Hart's private life. Hart is married. The stories said he dated other women.

Last spring, Hart said that wasn't true. He said reporters could follow him to check the stories out.

Reporters from the Miami Herald watched Hart's home in Washington. They wrote that he was with a young woman who was not his wife. She was Donna Rice, a model and actress.

There is a famous picture of Hart with Donna Rice. It was taken on a boat in Florida. She is sitting in his lap. A friend took the picture. But it ended up in the newspapers. .

Hart said he made a mistake by being with Donna Rice. He stopped running for president. He said he was tired of stories about his private life. It was nobody else's business, he said.

Since then, Hart has traveled to Europe. He worked as a lawyer. He also gave speeches. He was paid $10,000 for some speeches.

Yesterday, Hart went to New Hampshire to start running for president again.

New Hampshire is a small state in New England. It has the first primary election for president. It will be on Feb. 16, 1988.

Winning in New Hampshire is important. It helps a candidate get more money to run in other states. He gets new supporters.

Hart won in New Hampshire in 1984. Nobody thought he had a chance before that election.

Friday is the last day to enter the New Hampshire primary. Hart went to Concord, N.H., to file election papers at the state capital.

Associated Press

Gary Hart and his wife, Lee

Hart owes a lot of money from his campaign.. He owes $1,100,000 from 1984. He also owes $53,625 from last spring.

By running again, he might get new money to pay his debts.

People who run for president have to raise money to begin. It costs millions of dollars.

But if a candidate follows certain rules, he can get money back from the government.

These are called *campaign matching funds.* For every dollar a candidate raises, he can get another dollar from the campaign fund. (The limit is about $11 million).

The money comes from our taxes. Most of us pay $1 to the campaign fund every year. It happens when we pay income taxes. (We can say on our tax form that we agree to pay the $1. Or we can decide to pay nothing for campaigns.)

When Hart dropped out of the race in May, he lost any chance to get matching money. Now he might get some of that money.

Hart says the money has nothing to do with why he is running. He says he has good ideas for the United States. He thinks running for president is the best way to talk about those ideas.

Hart knows he will be asked more about his private life. He wants the voters to judge him.

Questions

1. **Gary Hart is (a)** president **(b)** a senator **(c)** a candidate for president.

2. **The New Hampshire primary will be held on** (a) Friday **(b)** next Feb. 16 (c) Nov. 8, 1988.

3. **Hart got matching funds to pay off all his debts.** True or False.

Answers

1. (c) 2. (b) 3. False

Talking Point

Do you think it's a good idea for Gary Hart to run for president again?

■

The Savvy Reader gives more information about stories in the newspaper. It appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Savvy Reader

Too much of fatty foods can be bad for your health. So especially during this holiday season, watch what you eat, and go easy on the rich butter, gravy and desserts.

People should watch what they eat this holiday season. They should go easy on gravy, butter, eggs and fatty meats. That's because these foods contain a lot of *cholesterol*.

Much has been written about cholesterol (say it Co-LES-ter-all). Too much cholesterol in the blood can clog arteries. It can cause *hardening of the arteries*. Doctors call this *arteriosclerosis*.

Cholesterol builds up in the arteries. Blood becomes clogged behind the choslesterol. This causes *blood clots*. Clots will stop or slow down the flow of blood. This can cause heart attacks.

Cholesterol is not always a bad thing. The body needs cholesterol. We would die without it. It has many uses.

Human cells are made partly out of cholesterol. Cells are like the building blocks of the body.

The liver uses cholesterol to make acids. These acids help the body digest food.

The body uses cholesterol to make certain *hormones*. Hormones are chemicals that cause many things to happen in the body.

The body makes most of its own cholesterol. It is made in the liver. Some cholesterol comes from food. And that starts the trouble.

But some people have special problems with cholesterol. Doctors don't know why. These people have to be very careful.

One way to control cholesterol is by diet. Doctors want people to stay away from too much fatty foods. They say: Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. Eat more fish, chicken and turkey.

Many people eat turkey for Christmas. Turkey is low in cholesterol. But the gravy on turkey is high in cholesterol. People put gravy and butter on potatoes. They eat rich desserts.

It's OK to eat these foods once in a while. But many people eat too much of them.

Exercise also helps keep cholesterol down. Doctors want people to exercise every day.

Drugs can cut down on cholesterol in the blood. A new drug is sold for this. It is called *gemfibrozil*.

This drug lowers cholesterol in the blood only a little. But it changes "bad" cholesterol into "good" cholesterol.

Ham is a fatty meat, high in cholesterol

Here is the difference:

Cholesterol is always the same. It is carried through the body by *lipoproteins*. These are special *molecules*. Molecules are tiny bits of matter. They are too small for the eye to see.

There are three kinds of lipoproteins. Two of them are dangerous, or "bad," ones. One kind makes for "good" cholesterol.

The drug called gemfibrozil raises the level of "good" cholesterol in the blood. It lowers the level of the "bad" cholesterol.

Another popular cholesterol drug is *lovastatin*. It reduces all cholesterol in the blood.

But doctors worry that this drug has *side effects*. That means it might harm the body.

The best way to stay healthy is to eat the right food and exercise regularly.

Questions:

1. Hormones are (a) cholesterol, (b) made in the liver, (c) chemicals that cause things to happen in the body.
2. Not all cholesterol is made in the body. True or False.
3. Doctors worry about the drug lovastatin because (a) of possible side effects, (b) it raises cholesterol levels, (c) it makes "bad" cholesterol.

Answers:

1. (c) 2. True 3. (a)

Talking point:

Can you name some things that people can do to take better care of their health?

■

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THE NEW

ILLITERACY

It's America's dirty little secret

By Muriel Cohen
Globe Staff

MAY 24 1987

America's emerging technological economy, now steering the country toward a 20th-century industrial revolution, is running into an unexpected and serious problem: a new brand of illiteracy.

Although the United States has attained nearly universal literacy by some standards, more than half of the adults in the country still cannot read or write well enough to hold the range of technical jobs opening up today, according to professor Jeanne Chall, director of the Harvard University Reading Labortory.

In addition, too few American workers have the post-secondary training needed to keep US industry ahead of Japan and Korea, MIT economist Lester Thurow believes. While new industries require a better-educated work force, employers today must cope with an average high school dropout rate of 25 percent, inadequately prepared high school graduates and increasing numbers of non-English-speaking immigrants.

Current estimates indicate there are one million adults who have basic literacy, equivalent to third grade; 22 million to 26 million who are functional illiterates, reading at fourth- or fifth-grade level; and 51 million who have the equivalent of eighth-grade reading and writing ability.

The growing number of illiterates is due in part to a revised definition of what constitutes illiteracy.

Forty years ago, literacy meant having the equivalent of a fourth-grade education. Since then, the level of skills required to be a productive member of modern society – to handle tasks as varied as reading a computer printout or understanding a manual for hooking up a VCR – has risen to the point where today a 12th-grade education is required.

"For work, for citizenship and for personal survival, a literacy level of at least 12th grade is needed today," said Stanford University professor Shirley Brice Heath, describing 12th-grade competence as the ability to use reading to solve problems and to gain information about how others solve problems.

"It is evident from national assessment scores, SAT scores and the results of most standardized achievement tests that many high schools do not meet this 12th-grade level," says Heath.

Such evidence of widespread illiteracy has pushed the issue high on the national political agenda, and today, programs to combat illiteracy proliferate on military bases, in schools and in the workplace. But there is still broad disagreement not only on the definition of illiteracy, but on how to cope with a problem that has such a broad social and economic impact.

Some telling numbers

In Massachusetts, for instance, there are no hard data on the number of illiterate adults in the state – but there are some telling numbers:

- More than half the 6,000 men and women now in the state's jails have not finished high school.
- An average of 500 job seekers a year in the state's Office of Employment Security are unable to fill out the applications.
- An estimated eight to 10 people a month take oral tests for drivers' licenses, because they are unable to read.
- From 5 percent to 10 percent of the state's job seekers are functionally illiterate, according to Linda Dobert of the state's Division of Employment Security.

The problem is not one of stupidity,

THE BOSTON GLOBE
May 24, 1987

Dobert said. "Many of those who can't read are pretty bright. They have to have a lot of other skills to compensate. The fact that they are surviving at all speaks to their abilities to survive."

Massachusetts has moved on the issue by naming former Sen. Gerard D'Amico to head the state's Commonwealth Literacy Corps, coordinating existing programs and identifying the scope of illiteracy in the state.

The national picture

Nationally, results of the National Assessment of Education Progress tests show blacks and Hispanics scoring in reading, writing and math below whites. They show that 97 percent of the 17-year-olds can read, but only 54 percent can make inferences and draw conclusions from their reading, and that only 21 percent have reading skills advanced enough for college, professional or technical work.

Critics say that too many of today's literacy programs are failing to attract and hold their students because they use simplistic methods, irrelevant materials and inadequately trained tutors. The specialists claim that literacy for an individual changes over a lifetime.

Chall says illiteracy cannot be overcome by the usual tactic, relying on volunteers as teachers. While such help is welcome and may be needed, Chall says, volunteers require professional supervision and training to help identify learning difficulties. Others say volunteers are too often only available for short terms and are often unreliable in attendance.

"Successful literacy programs spring from very specific personal and organizational needs," says David Harman, a visiting professor at Columbia University's Teachers College and author of a new work, "Illiteracy."

Harman, who has researched literacy efforts in a number of countries, said, "After having 'graduated' from literacy programs, people are apt to revert to their original illiterate status very rapidly."

A matter of priorities for some

He also remarks on a phenomenon known as "aliterates," people who can read but don't. They get their news and entertainment from television, and their jobs do not require reading or writing.

In Massachusetts, most adult literacy programs lose their students before the course ends, said Gail Ewer, state director of adult basic literacy. "One of our major problems is recruiting and holding adults who function at minimum levels," she said. "If they are already employed, they may not see the need to read. If you need money to feed your kids, learning to read is not a top priority."

While the pressure is building so that more adults meet 12th-grade standards, Thurow, newly appointed head of the Sloan School at MIT, argues that industry will need a work force trained beyond high school. He said the country should be particularly concerned because women, who generally have inadequate math and science training, will soon constitute 50 percent of the work force.

Thurow is among the keenest critics of American schools. He has made extensive comparisons between US and Japanese industry and claims that Japanese parents demand and get higher standards of their schools than Americans.

"We have the shortest school year in the industrial world," as well as an overblown school bureaucracy, Thurow says.

Although the business of overcoming illiteracy has itself become a growth industry, literacy remains a moving target, largely undefined and difficult to measure.

THE BOSTON GLOBE
May 24, 1987

The trying times of an illiterate

By Bella English
Globe Staff

Clarence gets up early weekday mornings to watch the television news so he can discuss current events with his co-workers, who read the newspapers.

On the rare occasion that he has to fill out a form at work, he will call his sister and ask her how to spell certain words.

When applying for jobs, he will claim that he's too busy to fill out an application and will return it later. He then takes it to his Dorchester home, where he gets help completing it.

Clarence is 35 and cannot read. It is his secret, one he hides from the guys at work, from employers, even from his children.

"I get very embarrassed," Clarence said during a recent interview. "I hope no one will ever find out I can't read." But he suspects some already know. In fact, he thinks a co-worker found out and told his boss. Shortly after, Clarence, a maintenance worker, was transferred to another job.

Unlike many others who cannot read, Clarence graduated from high school, in North Carolina. "They just let me through," he said. "I copied other people's papers, and then when they put me in a special learning class, there weren't any real tests. They didn't care if I could read or not."

Clarence cannot read a newspaper headline. He took an oral driver's test because he couldn't read the written one. When his two children ask for help on their homework, he makes excuses. "After they got in the first grade, I was lost," he said.

When he worked as a short-order cook, he never had to read a recipe; he knew how to make the simple fare required of him.

Globe staff photo/Thomas Landers
ABCD teacher Terri Tirella, left, with student Sheldene Hope.

Recently, Clarence enrolled in a reading program at Action for Boston Community Development. His recent job transfer – and the fact that he believes people are discovering that he can't read – gave him the shove he needed to sign up.

"I'm tired of faking it," Clarence said. "During lunch, the guys at work read the papers or bring a love book from home. I just sit there twiddling my thumbs."

Like Clarence, many of those who can't read devise elaborate systems to help them cope. Many compensate by honing their memories. They memorize signs such as "No Smoking" or "Stop." They memorize bus schedules. When they shop for groceries, they memorize labels. If traveling to a strange place, they may first make a "practice" run. They will copy addresses off envelopes to pay bills.

Perhaps most important, they have a network of relatives or close friends who can translate for them. And they have ingenious ways for covering up their illiteracy.

"They'll say they forgot their glasses and can't read something, or if you hand them a cartoon, they'll pretend to read it and laugh," said John Strucker, a reading teacher at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge.

If their children come to them and ask how to pronounce a certain word, they may say, 'I'm not going to tell you. Look it up,'" said Jay Grymes, education coordinator for the ABCD learning center.

"Most go in and pay their bills in cash, so they won't have to write a check," said Liz Steward, a guidance counselor at ABCD.

Many of those who decide to enter reading programs are motivated by work. Jobs aren't hard to come by if you can't read, but better jobs are.

That is why Michael, 24, has started taking reading classes. He is unemployed, and wants to get a "good job" with a future. "I can't even write my own address unless I see it," he said.

Michael has never written a letter or read a newspaper. During a recent reading lesson at ABCD, he laboriously began to copy a story about the Nicaraguan contras into his workbook, but he had no idea what the words meant.

Both Clarence and Michael started at the primer level, which is pre-first grade. They began by learning short and long vowels.

At one lesson, teacher Terri Tirella asked Clarence to read a passage titled "Bob Is Late." Using a finger to follow each word, Clarence read in a slow monotone, stumbling over words such as "date" and "rose" and failing to pause for punctuation. He read "lane" as "leaving," "which" as "where," and "six" as "sit." When he copied words off the blackboard, his handwriting was that of a small child's.

"The day I learn to read," Clarence says, "will be the happiest day of my life."

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May 24, 1987

Uncle Sam Wants You. . . to read

By Diego Ribadeneira
Globe Staff

As countless literacy programs across the country grope to find the most effective way to teach people how to read, the military, in training its soldiers, has been in the vanguard in tackling this complex issue.

With an average of nearly 300,000 enrollments per year, the military runs what is perhaps the largest literacy program in the nation – and the most successful, according to some educators. The military has succeeded where many civilian literacy programs have not, because it provides soldiers a reason to be literate.

Too many civilian programs, though well-intentioned, fail to tangibly illustrate the advantages students will enjoy if they're able to read. As a result, many students experience the same kind of boredom and frustration that drove them from school when they were younger. They drop out again – and this time, in many cases, for good.

Providing the proper incentive

The military has taken a different approach, which involves not only providing soldiers an incentive to be literate but using the military as the text. It's an approach favored by many literacy advocates, who argue that it should be adopted universally by civilian programs.

Although it might seem surprising that the military is being touted as a successful literacy teacher, the military has always taken great interest in educating servicemen.

Throughout the history of the United States, the military has played a vital role in the spread of literacy. From its beginnings, the Army kept a close watch on its soldiers, maintaining detailed records based on reading tests, and using chaplains, who were often the only military members among the lower ranks who were fully literate, as teachers.

In this century, it was the military during World War II that developed the concept of functionality – the notion that the most efficient way to develop literacy among soldiers was to incorporate a military theme into the teaching material, said Thomas Sticht, an educator who has worked closely with the Army since the late 1960s, developing and monitoring literacy programs.

After the war, when the need for large numbers of trained soldiers abated, the military changed its focus from functionality to a more general literacy curriculum geared to helping soldiers obtain a high school diploma. At that time, men did not have to be high school graduates to join the Army.

"It became nonfunctional, and instead became academically oriented," Sticht said in a recent telephone interview from his San Diego office. "It became much more general."

A new concept emerges

During the 1960s, as technology grew more complicated and training soldiers became more involved, the military commissioned a study of its literacy efforts, led by Sticht, out of which emerged a new functionality concept that was narrower than that developed in World War II.

"This time, unlike World War II, we focused on specific job requirements," Sticht said. "We incorporated technical and specific career needs into the teaching material." Sticht and his team divided the course curriculum into six job clusters. Since then, every inductee into the military is screened by counselors and given tests to determine if literacy help is needed. Anyone scoring below a 10th-grade reading level is enrolled in classes.

Making the course instruction relevant to specific military jobs provides a strong inducement for students. Many leading literacy advocates argue that students must be shown a purpose for literacy.

"Literacy . . . cannot be forced upon people," writes David Harman, an education professor at Columbia University's Teachers College, in his book, "Illiteracy: A National Dilemma," published this year.

The overwhelming majority of those taking literacy classes are in the Army, even though a high school diploma is now required to join any military branch. "Obviously, being a high school graduate is not a guarantee that one is fully literate," said one Army education specialist.

Functionality the key

At Fort Devens, a student is not graduated from the program until his reading level is above the 10th grade. There are no dropouts because the courses are considered part of a soldier's duty. Many graduating students score well above the 10th grade, according to Fort Devens officials.

"Yeah, it's pretty tough," said Dan Isaacs, a 22-year-old private first class from Detroit, while working on a reading assignment. "But I like it because it's about the Army, so it's more interesting. When I was younger, I was never much interested in what the schools were teaching."

One of the reading comprehension passages in Isaacs' workbook talked about the need to wear protective masks to ward off chemical and biological contamination; another described the meaning of military flags and colors.

Although the military literacy program has a narrow scope, educators say the skills learned can be transferred to civilian life.

Because of the importance it places on functionality, the military, Sticht and others say, is far ahead of civilian programs in its approach to literacy.

"People are sent into basic skills programs to improve reading skills for job training, when, in fact, the reading skills should be integrated in job training," Sticht said.

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Booming state economy faces a stiff challenge

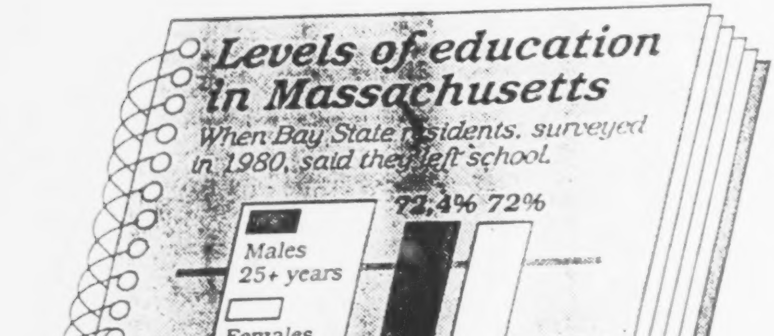
By Sarah Snyder
Globe Staff

Last winter, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce surveyed businesses to find out how interested they were in starting their own in-house basic education programs.

Of two-dozen large companies that responded, 70 percent said they would be willing to pay for such programs as reading, writing, English as a Second Language and computer literacy.

Their answers were one sign of a growing awareness among businesses of the need to help combat the "new illiteracy" – the gap between the basic skill level of entry workers today and the demands of constantly more complicated jobs.

"Part of the problem is the tight labor force, part is automation, the change in more service-oriented jobs requiring higher literacy," said Ron Bradley, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce's subcommittee on adult literacy and director of corporate training at Blue Cross-Blue Shield.



Source: US Census Bureau Globe chart/Deborah Perugi

Lloyd David, director of the Continuing Education Institute in Medford, said many companies that have "gotten away" in the past with employees not knowing how to read, such as assemblers who are able to work entirely by color coding, are now finding literacy more essential.

"I think companies are getting the message that if they want to have a work force that's promotable, trainable and motivated, they're going to have to do a lot of the basics in-house," he said.

Increasingly, say human resource managers, Boston businesses either are cooperating more with outside training agencies or are bringing education programs into their own companies.

Another approach is that taken by large organizations like Blue Cross-Blue Shield and Beth Israel Hospital. Both have adult diploma programs, in which employees typically meet in the company classroom, after their work shift, with teachers under contract to the company. The cost to the company is perhaps $1,500 to $2,400 per person.

While some large companies have had in-house skills programs for years – Liberty Mutual Insurance Co.'s Career Center, for example – most companies do not see basic skills training as something they can easily afford, said several experts. They still look to the schools and government-funded agencies to equip employees with the basics.

Along with an awareness of the growing need for higher literacy in the workplace, there was a note of optimism in the Chamber of Commerce survey for potential employees with low basic skills. When companies were asked what would most assist their employees, their first choice – ahead of reading, English as a Second Language or writing – was "general job readiness."

"They're saying attitude is more important than skill, and skill is more important than a degree," said Bradley. If a person can present himself or herself to a company as being a responsible person who will be there every day, and is looking to work hard, that will make up for almost anything else," Bradley said.

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Battling the problem in Central Square

By Diego Ribadeneira
Globe Staff

CAMBRIDGE – Here in a Central Square building on a second-floor suite of cramped offices and makeshift classrooms, a group of dedicated employees and volunteers is on the front lines of the battle against illiteracy.

Dedicated to their cause, genuinely concerned about their students, they are nonetheless realistic about the many obstacles they face and the magnitude of the problem. The problems faced by the country in overcoming illiteracy are evident in microcosm at the 16-year-old Community Learning Center here.

Perhaps the most compelling statistic found in the latest literature is the staggering number of adults who need literacy help – adults whom programs fail to reach. In Cambridge, recent reports showed that only 2,250 – or about 15 percent – of the estimated 15,000 adults needing classes were enrolled in programs. In Boston, the situation is bleaker. Out of an estimated 200,000 adults needing literacy assistance, just about 3,000 – or 1.5 percent – are receiving it.

The low percentage of those reached is amplified when the large number of dropouts reported by learning centers is considered. Local studies indicate that the dropout rate for the Boston area is somewhere between 30 percent and 50 percent.

Part of the difficulty in attracting students can be traced to the stigma of personal failure and shame felt by many adults with low literacy. Indeed, although a recent flurry of media reports has helped focus national attention on the issue of illiteracy, some educators say the publicity may have had the unintended effect of driving away self-conscious adults.

"It may have frightened students," said John Strucker, a reading teacher and coordinator of daytime volunteers at the Community Learning Center. "It may have given out the message that they were placing a burden on society. They're already shy, and the publicity may just serve to drive them underground."

One student spoke of the difficulty of admitting he had a problem. "You know how hard it is to realize that you can't read?" asked John, 25, of Dorchester. "It's admitting that you failed. It takes a lot of guts to come in for classes."

Another student, David, 23, of Boston, said he attended several schools and hired private tutors, but sought help only after he couldn't read to his fiancee's 3-year-old nephew. "That was hard to take," he said. "That's when I knew I had to get back to school."

The overriding problem that adult literacy centers must contend with is a lack of funding. Strucker said federal, state and local funding allows the center to spend $100 per student, while the Cambridge public schools allot more than $5,000 per pupil.

"There's no cheap solution to illiteracy, and it's kind of insulting to me that they take these most-at-risk people and say you can fix them up for next to nothing," Strucker says. "These are the very ones we should not be neglecting."

Many centers also rely on and compete with each other for the limited resources available from foundations and businesses. Funding is not guaranteed from year to year.

Some of the other problems cited by adult literacy centers in and around Boston, and oulined in a report conducted last year by the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, include:

- The huge number of immigrants needing not only literacy instruction but English as a Second Language classes as well. ESL students make up about 60 percent of enrollments in the Boston area; of these, a large majority – some 75 percent – are illiterate in their native language.
- The failure to recognize teaching literacy to adults as a profession similar to an elementary, high school or college teacher. There is no state certification for such teachers, and few education schools in the state train teachers and administrators of adult literacy.
- The poor pay earned by adult literacy teachers leaves little or no money for professional development.

Despite these hurdles, the work continues for the 25 teachers and more than 100 volunteers at the Community Learning Center, which, each year, enrolls about 1,500 students.

"If we don't commit ourselves wholeheartedly, then I think we'll be faced with a national disaster," said one volunteer.

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Q&A

David Harman, professor of education at Columbia's Teachers College in New York and the author of "Adult Illiteracy in the United States," was interviewed by Globe education writer Muriel Cohen:

Q. Please define literacy?

A. Literacy has a dual definition: The first is the ability to read and write, a technical ability to recognize letters of the alphabet, know which sound each one has and put them together in words, then phrases, sentences and so forth.

The second part of the definition is much more complicated. It relates to the uses of literacy within a society, and it means much more than just mechanical ability. It entails vocabulary, knowledge of the culture and of one's society.

Q. What is functional literacy?

A. In recent years people have tried to identify a single, universal standard. There are some people now saying a 12th-grade equivalency is necessary in order to function in society today.

Q. Are there stages of literacy?

A. Literacy is a moving target. It's not that we sit in school and acquire literacy up to, say, an eighth-grade level like you fill up a bank with deposits and then assume that everything you've ever acquired is there to stay. We can add to it. Literacy abilities change in reaction to changed circumstances. We can increase or broaden the literacy abilities because we've become interested in something else, something new; because we've moved to a new position, a new profession; because of some change that's occurred.

Q. As you look ahead, can you see any change in what people will need to know? Will we need to have different kinds of literacy?

A. Yes, because when we talk about literacy, we're not really talking about reading and writing. We're talking about something that goes way beyond that. It's knowledge. It's vocabulary. And, yes, as the knowledge requirements change, as the vocabulary requirements change, then we're finding changes. One example that pops into mind immediately is happening in our lifetime in a relatively brief period of time.

When you and I were going through school, computers were not part of our world. And today, my 8-year-old is talking about computer paper. It's not a word I knew until I was finished with graduate school. So, of course, things are changing.

Q. Where would you spend the money?

A. A literacy corps is not going to do the trick. There is a national literacy corps now, through VISTA, which has been funded by $2 million. They're floundering around not really knowing what to do.

There is an awful lot in American schools that ought to be changed. But there is an awful lot which is terrific. Plus, one must recognize that schools can't change everything. All they can do is accurately mirror the environments in which they work. So if you want to make substantial changes, make some substantial changes in environments and not the schools

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High-tech lends a helping hand

By Muriel Cohen
Globe Staff

ATLANTA – At 46, Joe Stahl says he has a good job as a testing specialist for an architectural firm that designs aluminum buildings. But it is not good enough. If he could read and write, he could earn more money, and advance in the firm.

So, at 4 o'clock each weekday afternoon, Stahl is hunched over a computer keyboard in a stuffy, windowless classroom, struggling with lessons that most children learn in elementary school.

Stahl is enrolled in an IBM program, one of 10 pilot programs around the country that use talking computers, video disc players and a touch screen computer terminal to teach adults how to read and write.

The adult literacy program is based on many of the same principles as the "Write to Read" program for elementary schools, already in use in many school systems, including Atlanta's.

A well-spoken, intelligent conversationalist, Stahl is among the nation's 23 million functional illiterates. He has attended 20 schools in as many years trying to overcome the learning disabilities that caused him to drop out of school in the ninth grade.

"My father used to hit me when I brought home failing marks, and I thought I was stupid, so I stayed home and worked on our farm," Stahl recalls with a bitter edge to his voice.

In 1963, after discharge from the Army, he took a course in electrical engineering and drafting. He could figure out the assignments because of pictures in the textbooks, he said, but he could not write.

Tested at Emory University, Stahl discovered he had a "fourth grade inventory of words and numbers. I worked for 21 years after that, but felt I was in a prison because I couldn't express myself on paper. A dyslexia expert at Emory put me in touch with this program," explained Stahl.

Known as PALS, an acronym for Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System, the program developed in a joint effort between professor John Henry Martin and IBM.

Despite heavy recruiting efforts and released time for city employees, the Atlanta classes are running at half of capacity.

Stahl's classmates are mostly male. Most are black and, like him, are school dropouts. One said that he stayed in school until 11th grade, but left because he still could not read and write.

Unlike Stahl, who has a white-collar job, the others are unemployed or working as custodians, as groundskeepers or as laborers in the city water department.

Across the room, a classmate types "nife" into her computer while writing a story about a family picnic. Two youngsters nearby are listening to a tape recorder, using forefingers to follow in their story books the words they are hearing.

Anne Evans, a teacher on loan from Washington, D.C., where she worked with "Writing to Read," explains, "This is a language arts program that works. The children move at their own pace. They don't experience failure. They begin to write by spelling words phonemically, which means spelling words the way they sound."

Because the PALS program is so recent, there is no long-term evidence that a 20-week cycle will be enough for its graduates to retain the literacy skills they learn.

The PALS program, like "Write to Read," uses talking computers, an interactive computer screen, laser discs or cassette recorders; this way, the student gets involved in speaking and listening as well as reading and writing.

Teacher Ruby Sherrill is concerned at the rigidity built into the program; it is now limited to an hour a day for 20 weeks.

"Some students ask if they can come back after the 20 weeks are over; but that is not allowed," said Sherill.

□

At the Gordon School on the east side of Atlanta, a first grader taps out the letter "s" on his computer keyboard. Each time "s" appears on the blue screen, the child hears the letter through earphones, and he quietly mouths the letter.

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The practices that create 'a culture of dumb jocks'

By Steven Marantz
Globe Staff

Illiteracy thrives in urban neighborhoods and rural backwaters, but it can also be found in high school and college locker rooms. An estimated 25-30 percent of high school senior football and basketball players are functional illiterates, according to Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society.

Illiteracy runs higher in those sports because of the preoccupation with obtaining college athletic scholarships, said Richard Lapchick, director of the center.

"We have created a culture of dumb jocks," said Lapchick. "From the time the parents go to the football or basketball games instead of the parent-teacher conferences, the kids see they are rewarded for athletic performance and not their grade average. The message comes home."

Football and basketball players are urged to take a lighter course load to maintain eligibility. But their dream of a college scholarship is remote; only one in a hundred is given a scholarship, and the others complete high school unprepared for employment or further schooling. The dream of a professional career is even more remote: One in 10,500 high school basketball players, and one in 4,900 football players make it.

Athletes have long been pushed through the academic system without being required to learn basic literacy skills. In 1983, less than 100 school districts out of 16,000 nationally had minimum academic standards for athletic participation.

There is the poignant story of Fred Butler, a star football player from Inglewood, Calif. Butler fell behind in reading in grade school, but when his mother brought this to the attention of administrators, they told her not to worry. Instead, they skipped Butler, and four other top football players, past eighth grade so that they could play varsity football. Butler carried a C-plus average, despite never having opened a book.

He went on to a community college, and the sham was repeated. He went on to Cal-State Los Angeles, but he flunked out as soon as his eligibility expired. He took a job in a factory, and later was charged with manslaughter stemming from the fatal shooting of his father during a dispute at home.

Released from jail to attend the burial, Butler never got to the cemetery.

"He couldn't find it because he couldn't read the street signs," said Lapchick.

Another highly publicized case was that of Creighton University basketball player Kevin Ross, who read at a second-to-fourth-grade range when he completed his eligibility in 1982. He decided to attend Westside Preparatory School in Chicago to learn to read.

The school's founder and director, Marva Collins, said last week that many top athletes lack basic literacy skills. Ross is now reading at the level of a college freshman.

In 1985, Texas became the first state to adopt the so-called "no pass-no play" rule, requiring athletes to maintain at least a 2.0 average. In the first year, 16 percent of varsity football players in Dallas were ineligible. Just 7.2 percent were ineligible the next year.

A similar rule in Prince Georges County, Md., caused 35 percent of varsity basketball and football players to be ineligible the first year. By the third year, the figure had dropped to 8 percent.

"The figures show you have to force athletes to achieve academically," said Lapchick.

Minimum academic entrance requirements for college athletes, adopted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association in 1986, have improved academic performance. High schoolers must maintain a C average in 12 core courses and score a combined 700 on Scholastic Aptitude Tests, or 1,500 on American College Testing exams.

The NCAA estimated that those requirements would have disqualified more than half of all football and basketball players in 1981, but that only 9 percent of football players and 13 percent of basketball players actually were affected in 1986. The NCAA's conclusion: Once warned, athletes will spend time preparing literacy skills.

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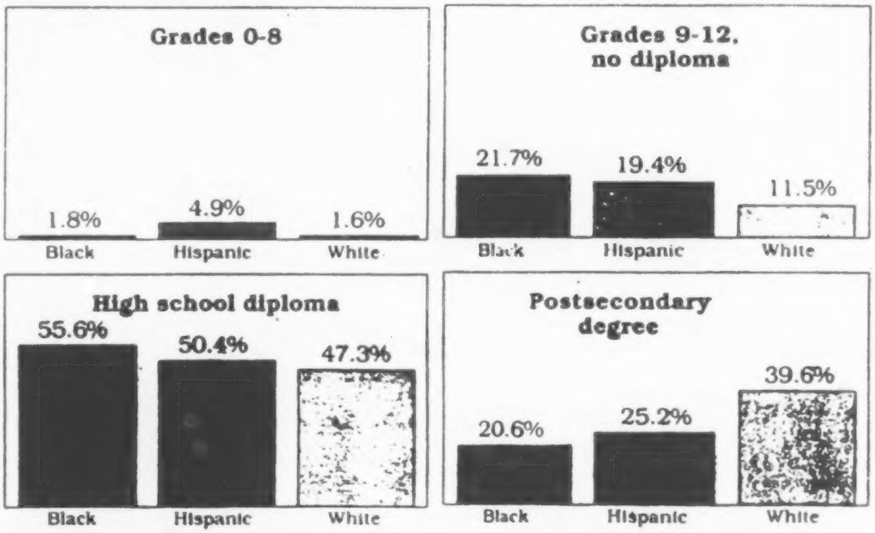
Illiteracy: A Report Card

Illiteracy is no longer simply the inability to read or write. It is the inability to use printed and written information to function in a technological society - with the resulting inability to achieve one's goals or to develop one's potential. The two factors measured below - years of schooling and reading skills - are important ingredients in overcoming illiteracy.

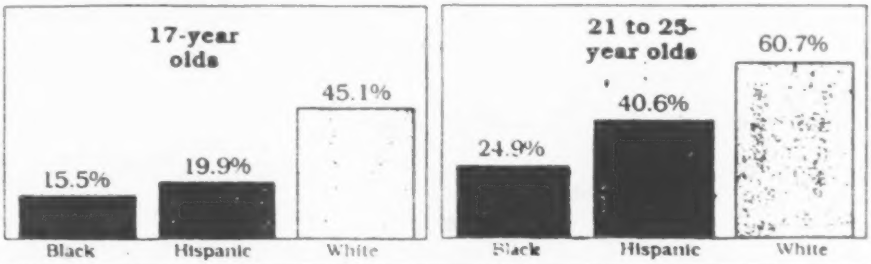
THE SCHOOL FACTOR

When young adults ages 21 to 25 complete their education



THE READING FACTOR

How young adults compare in reading at an adept level



Source: Educational Testing Service. Globe chart by G. [illegible]

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Gains slipping away in Nicaragua

By Philip Bennett
Globe Staff

ESTELI, Nicaragua – Rafael Oliva, a 32-year-old peasant from one of the more dangerous areas of a country at war, says there are a few things sadder than being illiterate.

Among them is becoming illiterate.

Oliva learned to read and write in 1980 during the National Literacy Crusade, a dramatic campaign by the young revolutionary government that in a few short months lifted some 400,000 Nicaraguans out of illiteracy.

"They gave me a diploma and a newspaper, and I left proudly," Oliva said. "But then the planting season came, and then the war, and I lacked the will to continue. Within a year, I had forgotten everything."

Seven years after an exercise in national will reduced Nicaragua's illiteracy rate from more than 50 percent to 13 percent, early advances in adult education under the Sandinista government are slipping away.

The guerrilla war with the contras has claimed some 300 teachers, and dramatic gains in literacy under a Sandinista campaign begun in the early '80s are fast evaporating.

Officials say the national illiteracy rate today stands near 25 percent. It has climbed to 40 percent in rural areas, where fighting between government troops and US-backed rebels, known as contras, has disrupted the lives of thousands of people and claimed the lives of some 300 teachers.

This spring, the government is initiating a new literacy campaign. Officials say the program is designed to address difficulties presented by the war, a severe economic crisis that has made paper and free time scarce and the practical demands of the country's poor.

"We've had to come up with an entirely new strategy," said Constantino Sanchez, the sub-director of literacy in the ministry of education.

Officials say the revised strategy includes the use of specialized texts for different regions of the country. Literacy classes will also be combined with training in technical fields, placing an emphasis on keeping students in class after they have completed a basic reading course.

The strategy also involves shying away from the political education that dominated earlier national efforts, they say.

Few countries in the world have approached the problem of illiteracy with hope and energy equal to that found in Nicaragua in 1980. The country had, months earlier, overthrown dictator Anastasio Somoza, who left a 50-percent illiteracy level as part of the legacy of his family's rule.

The National Literacy Crusade was billed by the new government as the largest mobilization in the country's history. Following a model of the insurrection, some 100,000 volunteers were organized in groups appearing like a glossary of revolutionary movements: The Popular Army of Literacy, the Urban Literacy Guerrillas, the Red and Black Brigades.

Although the crusade was described as vital to increase economic production, its political importance was not lost on members of the Sandinista Front, known by the acronym FSLN, who at the time were securing their role in power.

"In many areas the Crusade marked the arrival of the revolution and the initiation of mass organization and creativity," wrote the ministry of education in a chronicle of the campaign.

The Sandinista Front was criticized for using the crusade for indoctrination of the revolution's so-called "new man." The national literacy textbook, "Dawn of the People," came under particular fire. The book's first chapter was titled "Revolution"; the first word for study was "struggle"; and the first sentence taught to students was, "The FSLN is the struggle."

Education officials now say the political content of the program made teaching more difficult.

"The national text didn't interest people," said Egberto Gonzalez, a Ministry of Education official in Esteli. "Many of the people in this zone were the social base of the contras, who exposed them to all sorts of ideological manipulation. So, when they saw our textbook, they rejected it. They said, we don't want any more politics."

A new textbook is nearing completion for the Esteli region. Rather than focusing on politics, it will be more closely related to production problems faced by peasants in the region, especially those displaced by the war.

Other officials said that model will soon be applied nationwide, with attention given to the different needs and vocabularies of urban and rural residents.

"We've pushed for more creative answers," said Sanchez, the literacy director. "The 'new man' we hoped to create is still in a process of evolution."

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For Keijiro: education above all

By Lucille Craft
Special to the Globe

Keijiro Takeda, 11, is blessed with good looks, an outgoing personality, an aptitude for sports and shows promise as a budding artist. But because he also excels in school, Keijiro is now undergoing the most academically taxing year of his life. He's on the educational fast track, studying intensively for entrance to a special junior high associated with Keio University, ranked among Japan's finest.

Success on the bruising round of exams next February means Keijiro will be able to avoid the "examination hell" of entrance exams that most Japanese college aspirants must undergo in the last year of high school.

His life now is less that of a sixth grader than of an American college student cramming during finals week. He attends public school from 8:20 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. and a half day on Saturdays – but that is only the beginning.

Every morning before school, he spends 30 minutes reviewing his lessons. After school, three days a week, he attends a juku, or a cram school. The rest of the time is devoted to studying practice test questions. He usually is in bed by 11 30 p.m. and up by 7 a.m.

Naturally, there is no room within this Spartan regimen for such juvenile pleasures as comic books, video games, baseball, commercial TV, vacations or even a party on his birthday. Sundays vary only in that his breakfast is a bit later, and in the evening, he is allowed a rare hour of watching a weekly historical drama on the national noncommercial television network.

Keijiro seems to be bearing up well. "Sometimes it's hard, and I don't feel like studying," he says. "I can't really play with kids from school. But even so, I think it's better to study hard. If I get into junior high, I'll be able to do things later that I want to do."

His Western-style desk goes unused. He and his mother, 43-year-old Noriko, believe he is more comfortable sitting on the floor at a low Japanese table. On it are a calculator, a large-faced clock, a box with dozens of sharpened pencils and a goosenecked lamp. On a recent evening, he was quizzing himself on questions like: "Name the US-Japan treaty revised in 1960." (The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security); and "What was Japan's period of high growth called?" ("rapid economic growth era").

Besides social studies, he will be tested on math, Japanese language and science. Noriko has cut back on her hours running an information-search service in order to be, in effect, his personal trainer and cheerleader. She carefully monitors his physical and mental health, videotapes TV documentaries and clips newspaper articles she thinks weill help him and checks constantly to make sure he understands every word of his lessons. The cramming seems to have paid off. He has now completed all the material normally covered in an eighth-grade curriculum.

"I am a kyoiku mama," admits Noriko, a slight, soft-spoken woman, referring to Japanese mothers who push their children to excel in order to gain entry to a top university. The baby boom has intensified the competition for places at top schools.

"I think rewarding people with ability is fair," Noriko says. "Money or status is irrelevant; only how good your test scores are, and, in that sense, I think it's fair."

The Japanese school system, set up by the American occupation, has succeeded in virtually eliminating illiteracy. According to the Japanese ministry of education, the literacy rate – the number of adults who have completed nine years of public school and are presumed able to read the Asahi Shimbun, Japan's version of The New York Times – is 99.98 percent.

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For Bobby: homework, sports, art and music

By Muriel Cohen
Globe Staff

Bobby Glazer is 11 and in the final weeks of the fifth grade at the Runkle School in Brookline. Although he spends far fewer hours on schoolwork than his counterpart in Japan, the pressure for success – academic, social and sports – is part of the family and school culture.

For Bobby, school begins at 8:15 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m., five days a week. His daily class schedule calls for 45 minutes to an hour of math; a similar period for writing; 45 minutes of reading instruction that uses children's literature rather than reading textbooks. Then there is language arts, which includes social studies, with teacher Anne Phillips integrating reading and writing in all of the subjects.

Three times a week, Bobby has science. He has 45 minutes a week in unified arts – which combines art, music and industrial arts – and twice a week there is a 45-minute period for physical education.

Bobby also plays in the school band, sings in the school chorus and takes trumpet lessons before school and piano lessons one afternoon a week. On two school-day afternoons and on Sunday mornings, he goes to Hebrew school.

He has soccer practice on Friday and tennis lessons on Wednesday, as well as Little League practice for twice-weekly games.

As soon as Bobby comes home from school, the family rule requires that he do his homework, a chore that takes 45 minutes to an hour a day. "He has to practice piano and get his homework done before dinner," says his mother, Jill, who works in public relations for New England Telephone Co.

He is also expected to spend at least a half-hour each day reading at home. Bobby says he is now reading a sports book called "Home Run," a book he took out of the local public library, where he attends a discussion group called Cover to Cover.

Bobby has attended art classes at the Museum of Fine Arts, and has taken lessons in crafts with his mother at the Brookline Arts Center.

Says his mother: "Going to college for Bobby is a given."

VOICES OF CONCERN

"Let us today resolve to roll up our sleeves and get to work. Across this land, let those who can read teach those who cannot." – *President Reagan, Sept. 8, 1983.*

"It is imperative in a democratic society that there be no substantial number of people who are not literate." – *Former Chief Justice Warren Burger.*

"It's an insane tragedy" that 700,000 of the nation's high school graduates each year "can't read the damned diploma."
– *Labor Secretary William E. Brock 3d.*

"Illiteracy is a national disgrace."
– *Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.).*

"00 percent literacy by the year 2000." – *Sen. Albert Gore Jr. (D-Tenn.).*

"Illiteracy is a curable disease. We just have to care enough."
– *Barbara Bush.*

THE BOSTON GLOBE
May 24, 1987

The problem that quietly clouds each of our horizons

by FRED BROWN
and CARMEN CARTER
News-Sentinel staff writers

Think of illiteracy as a disease that attacks communities, say the people who are fighting it throughout Tennessee.

It condemns families to lives of poverty.

It pushes children out of school and into delinquency.

It raises our taxes and our crime rates while clouding our economic future.

Yet it is what illiteracy does to the individual that hurts most of all.

"You see, we spend all of our lives blanketing our fears to keep people from knowing that we can't read," said an East Tennessee trucker, who kept his illiteracy from his wife for the first three years of their marriage.

He cried when he described losing his job and putting his wife and children at risk because he couldn't read.

"We put a wall up to protect us . . ."

This man is intelligent and thoughtful, as are many of the people who somewhere along the way got left behind in reading. He went back to class. Today he can read.

He is an example of the good news, say the people who fight illiteracy.

The bad news is that there are few resources available to help the tens of thousands of people in Tennessee who still cannot read.

A report by Democratic Fourth District Rep. Jim Cooper shows:

- Tennessee ranks near the bottom of the nation in terms of literacy.
- The state spends less on literacy and adult education than any other Southeastern state except Mississippi. It also ranks near the bottom of the country in spending on general education.
- As many as a million Tennesseans lack the reading and writing skills to handle simple, everyday tasks or to hold down a job.

The penalty illiteracy imposes on the state and its citizens reaches beyond our borders, Cooper says.

He recalls the Exxon subsidiary that wanted to locate in Hancock County, 70 miles north of Knoxville in the Cumberland Mountains. The county has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the country.

"When the plant manager found out, he said he did not want to come anywhere close to the county. He was offered a home in Morristown near the country club. He still didn't come," Cooper says.

The county didn't get that plant.

"That's unfortunate," Cooper said. "Hancock County people have the reputation of being some of the hardest workers anywhere."

The stories contained in this special section explore the causes of illiteracy, the problems it causes, and some possible solutions.

It focuses on programs that are available to help adults learn to read.

It tells the stories of people who have battled illiteracy and won.

And it tells how you can become part of the solution.

"I feel a lot better about myself now," said a woman who learned to read 20 years after she dropped out of school. She plans to take job training classes now.

"I've wanted to work and better myself. I've been on assistance about four years and it's no life at all . . ."

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Coping with a world that reads

Many of the people who need literacy programs are too embarrassed to be interviewed, identified, or singled out. But people who work in literacy programs can tell you stories. . .

by FRED BROWN

News-Sentinel staff writer

The young mother in Anderson County thought she was doing all she could for her sick child.

She continued rubbing ointment on its tiny chest, thinking that any day the baby would get better.

The child didn't. In fact, each day it became worse as the illness intensified and the baby began having seizures.

The mother continued with the chest rubs, only with more vigor.

A friend happened by one day to check on the mother and her child. She could see that the baby was clearly very, very sick at this stage.

The friend asked the mother what she was doing to care for the baby. The mother showed her the bottle of ointment she had been rubbing on the heaving chest.

It was mosquito repellent.

☆ ☆ ☆

A Knox County truck driver, who was having trouble locating his delivery destinations finally devised a plan that was foolproof.

After hauling his load the distance, he pulled into a truck stop on the outskirts of the destination city and made a phone call.

When the taxicab arrived, the truck driver's excuse was always the same: This is the first time I have been to this city and I can't find a thing. Can you lead me to this address?

Of course, the cabbie was more than happy, because he was charging the trucker for great distances.

Since the trucker was unable to count change accurately, he had no idea how much money he was losing until his wife went with him one day and discovered his secret.

☆ ☆ ☆

The woman needed the job desperately. Her husband was sick at home with her two blind sons. So, she took anything she could find and considered herself lucky when she got the sewing job.

After a few weeks on the job, she cut her hand severely and nearly lost a finger in the machine.

She couldn't read the sign that warned the operator to be careful, that the instrument was extremely sharp and dangerous.

She lost her job because it was discovered she couldn't read the warning.

☆ ☆ ☆

The words on the medicine bottle instructed that the medicine should be refrigerated and to shake well before using.

It was left on the kitchen counter and used frequently by the mother. She was content that she was doing all that she could to cure her baby's cough.

The child became very sick a few days later. A tutor with an East Tenneseee county literacy program visited the mother, encouraging her to come to class.

She discovered the sick child and asked what was being done to help the baby.

The mother showed her the medicine bottle, with its instructions. The tutor called the pharmacist only to find that the medicine could harm the child if it were not refrigerated.

The baby, already very ill, almost died before it could be cured of what had begun as a simple cold.

The mother could not read the medicine bottle label.

☆ ☆ ☆

He is a big man, round and jovial. He enjoys good food, good talk and good times. However, he doesn't venture out too much. He doesn't visit large cities if he can avoid them.

Once it became a necessity. He had to take his wife to her family's home in Indianapolis, Ind.

"It was confusing, but I just kept on driving. She would look at me and ask what was wrong.

"I told her I wasn't used to driving in all the traffic.

"We got on a one-way street going the wrong way.

"My wife asked me if I was crazy or didn't I see the one-way sign.

"I had seen it. But I didn't know what it meant. It was just a bunch of scribbling to me."

Up to that point in their marriage, his wife had not known that her husband was quite illiterate and could not read the first road sign.

☆ ☆ ☆

The car salesman in a county adjacent to Knoxville was one of the best men in the business. He was always one of the top salesmen and had a fine career in front of him.

He was at the top or nearly always at the top each month when the sales were tallied.

None of his colleagues thought there was anything strange about that; he had a super personality, could talk about most any subject and was knowledgeable about sports, especially football.

It did seem a little strange, though, when he began leaving work early a couple of nights a week. When the early departures continued, some of his friends began asking him if he was having some kind of problem.

He assured them that everything was all right, that he was attending to personal business.

Later, it was discovered that the salesman could not read or write and that he was attending literacy classes in another county.

He didn't want anyone in his home county to discover his deeply guarded secret.

☆ ☆ ☆

In Campbell County, a group of women decided that they would do something about illiteracy.

They put up a number of tables outside a store in Jellico. They offered pamphlets urging those without high school diplomas to take charge of their lives and to help themselves to a better education.

Many people stopped by and looked at the fliers and seemed interested.

The women wondered why they had few takers.

They discovered later that most of the adults coming before them were too embarrassed to let the women see that they could not read their sign that asked them to sign up for the program.

☆ ☆ ☆

A young mother in Jellico was instructed on the medicine bottle to give her baby three drops a day.

She was feeding the baby three tablespoons. . .

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The problem of... illiteracy

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One idea: A TVA to fight illiteracy

by **FRED BROWN**
News-Sentinel staff writer

It may take something similar to a Tennessee Valley Authority to whip the illiteracy problem in the state.

So says Warren Neel, dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of Tennessee. He just stepped down as commissioner of the state's Employment Security Division for former Gov. Lamar Alexander.

"TVA came to the valley to do the same thing for electricity. When we opened up new roads it opened new possibilities.

"I don't know whether we need a TVA for this, but we could look at those models that have worked and see why they have worked and see where their shortcomings are."

A look at the numbers shows how big the problem is.

Nationwide there are nearly 72 million Americans who are functionally illiterate. A functionally illiterate person can read at seventh-grade level, or less.

In Central Appalachia, which includes East Tennessee, the numbers are even worse.

Nearly half of the unemployed adults in the region are illiterate, according to the Appalachian Regional Commission.

"In the country as a whole, 45 million of the non-school population 25 years of age or older have less than a high school diploma," the ARC says.

"In many Appalachian counties, less than a third of the population has a high school diploma. In the region as a whole, over 5 million adults 25 years of age or older lack a high school diploma," the ARC says.

The problem is reflected in the welfare rolls.

At least 70 percent of the women who receive Aid to Families of Dependent Children in Tennessee do not have high school diplomas and more than one-third of all AFDC mothers in Tennessee are functionally illiterate, according to Teddy Cook, state literacy coordinator.

Too many, too early

Dropout rates in East Tennessee counties

County	8 years or less	1-3 high school	4 high school	1-3 college	4 or more college
Anderson	23.8 %	14.0 %	32.1%	11.9 %	18.2 %
Bledsoe	44.2	16.1	28.9	4.9	5.9
Blount	27.2	15.7	33.4	12.4	11.3
Bradley	31.7	15.3	29.8	12.7	10.5
Campbell	46.6	16.0	24.2	7.1	6.1
Claiborne	49.0	12.2	25.5	6.4	6.9
Cocke	43.2	16.7	28.8	6.0	5.3
Fentress	54.6	11.6	23.4	3.6	6.6
Grainger	49.7	15.9	25.0	5.4	4.1
Greene	37.0	15.5	30.3	8.3	8.9
Hamblen	32.5	16.6	30.8	11.0	9.2
Hancock	60.0	11.5	21.1	3.2	4.2
Hawkins	38.4	14.5	33.4	6.9	6.7
Jefferson	35.6	18.1	32.1	8.1	8.1
Knox	20.6	15.0	31.3	14.3	18.8
Loudon	35.1	16.2	33.2	8.8	6.7
McMinn	36.3	16.4	30.0	9.5	7.9
Meigs	36.4	20.3	29.1	8.5	5.8
Monroe	45.2	15.6	25.4	7.8	6.0
Morgan	40.4	19.1	31.9	4.7	3.9
Polk	45.5	13.8	28.5	6.1	6.1
Roane	30.6	15.3	32.0	11.6	10.6
Scott	47.6	14.7	28.1	4.5	5.1
Sevier	34.3	14.8	31.2	10.4	9.3
Sullivan	28.3	14.7	31.7	12.2	13.2
Unicoi	38.6	16.2	27.9	9.6	7.7
Union	49.3	14.5	28.8	4.6	2.6
Washington	26.6	16.1	34.6	15.7	18.2
U.S. average	18.3	15.3	28.5	13.6	15.0

SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau

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Neel says the link between poverty and unemployment is strong and tough to break.

"The evidence shows that if you take the 20 highest counties in this state with the highest unemployment rate and the 20 with the lowest unemployment rate and look at the educational attainment level of the work force, there is a direct relationship between the educational attainment level and the unemployment rate.

"The higher the educational level, the lower the unemployment rate," Neel says.

"It is obvious that jobs are becoming more sophisticated and demanding more skills, and so individuals who did not have to confront the issue of being functionally illiterate on the work floor will be confronted," he says.

"For example, many processes that are being computerized . . . have dial readouts. They have decision points in the process that the operator must make based on readings. It will be extremely difficult for a functionally illiterate person to operate.

"And we are not talking about terribly sophisticated equipment, either. We are talking about upgrading manufacturing to make us world competitive."

A report by the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky confirms the link between poverty, unemployment and the region's high school dropout rate.

The report cites Hancock County, Tenn., as an example.

The county has a dropout rate of 32.6 percent among 16- to 19-year olds. Forty-one percent of its population is below the poverty level and only 9.7 percent of the county's school revenue comes from the county.

"Poor economic conditions . . . translate into financial hardships for local school districts," the report said.

"In counties where more than half of the adults have not finished high school, and nearly half of the population lives below the poverty level, the traditional link between education and social advancement may simply not exist for young people, either in terms of the role models provided by adults around them or the economic realities of finding work within the region," the report says.

Campbell County is another example of poverty and illiteracy going hand in hand.

The high school dropout rate is 25.2 percent, the unemployment rate nearly 17 percent.

Almost 63 percent of the adults in the county have fewer than 12 years of education.

Ann Hoblas, literacy coordinator in the county, says one problem is the county's isolation. Another is that many parents of students can't read.

"They can't convey the excitement to their children and don't have reading material in the house to read.

"There is not even a Head Start program in Jellico," she says.

"In general my impression is that there is a dedicated group of teachers up here.

"But if you know anything about Campbell County, you know that about two-thirds is owned by outside firms. Money for services like education is minimal. The county school budget is never enough to fund education."

She says that, in recent years, teachers have had to use their own money to buy teaching materials.

She said that, in some years, students have had to sell doughnuts and other items outside of school during school hours to raise money for essentials like chalk and blackboard erasers.

Neel said that the ability to read is critical to the fabric of our society

He noted that Thomas Jefferson said, "A democratic society is premised upon a knowledgeable electorate.

"He (Jefferson) also said he would defer to an informed republic, that you must have a republic that can read and make choices, and if you have functionally illiterate people you have jeopardized the foundations of democracy," Neel said.

"If there is low income in the counties, then there is no tax base, and with no taxes you have a low quality of schools," Neel says.

To confront the problems of illiteracy, Neel said, planners must begin looking at much larger areas.

"The Knoxville labor force is not just Knox County. The work force quality in La Follette and Johnson City is woven into the fabric and economic future of Knox County.

"It would behoove Knoxville to be just as interested in assisting in a quality of labor force far beyond the county line because that is where it is drawing its labor force from.

"What this says is that we are going to have to use innovative ways to subsidize the infrastructure in some of these counties to get them going.

"I don't have a magic solution to that, but what we are seeing is something we should be very concerned about."

And there is the TVA model, Neel said.

"I don't believe we will be able to solve the issue by looking at it in the narrow view. The problem is too pronounced.

Neel said There is little doubt in his mind that the state might attract industries and they could end up being located "in the back yard of a functionally illiterate. (And that) is not a job opportunity at all.

"The real policy issue for me is how we break this cycle. Illiteracy feeds on illiteracy so the problem continues to grow."

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Rep. Cooper says economic disaster brewing

by FRED BROWN
News-Sentinel staff writer

U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper, a Rhodes scholar, a Harvard Law graduate and a two-term congressman from the 4th District, was surprised to learn that he represents a district with one of the highest illiteracy rates in the nation.

He now sees illiteracy in the Volunteer State as having the potential to destroy the economy.

He is so concerned about the problems of illiteracy and Tennessee that he ordered members of his staff to study the problem and encouraged four state legislators to form a literacy task force.

That task force, established last April, was made up of state Sen. Anna Belle Clement O'Brien, D-Crossville; J.B. Shockley, R-Morristown; and state Reps. Les Winningham, D-Huntsville, and Zane Whitson, R-Erwin.

The panel held a series of meetings across the state and issued its report, "Tennessee Literacy 2000, an Agenda for Action," last month.

The report contains sweeping recommendations to Gov. Ned McWherter, who has the report now.

Cooper says what he learned from the study is that his state is extremely far behind other Southern states in terms of working with illiterates and bringing them up to social and educational speed.

And he fears the state could be devastated both economically and from a productivity standpoint if immediate measures aren't initiated.

Cooper's report, put together by aide Julie Strawn, found:

- That there are 1.3 million Tennesseans over the age of 16 who have dropped out of high school and about 450,000 of them dropped out before reaching the eighth grade.
- That the state ranks near the bottom of the nation — 44th among the 50 states — in terms of literacy.
- That Tennessee spends less on literacy and adult education — only about 54 cents per person — than any other Southeastern state except Mississippi.
- That as many as a million citizens lack the reading and writing skills to handle simple, everyday tasks or to hold down a job.

The report recommends that the governor establish a Literacy 2000 Committee to develop long-range planning to meet the state's literacy needs.

It also suggests, among other things:

- That a Volunteer Literacy Corps be established to have full-time literacy coordinators throughout the state.
- That $2 million be spent on literacy this year.
- That literacy be promoted in the workplace.
- That the state study the "no-read, no-release" prison program.
- That oral driver's license tests be banned.

Cooper said he became concerned about the problems of illiteracy in Tennessee, especially in his district, when he read a report in U.S. News and World Report that said his district was one of the most illiterate in the nation, according to the U.S. Census.

He also said that he had noticed at many of his town meetings that some of his constituents were reluctant to sign their names and give their addresses.

"At first, I thought they might be Republicans and just didn't want to give anything to a Democrat. Many said they would sign up, but they forgot their glasses and asked me to do it for them."

Cooper said many of his constituents would come to him with Social Security problems. Many were unable to read instructions and some lost their benefits because they didn't know they had to respond within a specified time limit.

"I began to see that this was a huge problem and not just a census criticism of my district. I started asking about state literacy programs and found that there were none, or there would be just a handful of people (working) in literacy."

Cooper said he takes no credit for the report, but clearly hopes that it will move the state to action.

"We don't spend as much money as Kentucky or Arkansas on literacy. And we are nowhere near what North Carolina spends," he said.

The report asks that the state use a $17 million surplus from the federally supported Jobs Training and Partnership Act, which replaced the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and spend at least as much as Kentucky ($2 million) this year on literacy.

That figure should increase over the next few years, he says, to $6 million.

"I want a first-rate program started. What matters is that we have to start pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. We are falling way behind."

The congressman says that Kentucky and Arkansas are two to three years ahead of Tennessee on literacy.

"It is a shame to think that those states lead us."

One of the more shocking elements of the report is that it discovered that 60 percent of incoming freshmen in community colleges lack basic skills and must take remedial courses.

The study also points out that the state keeps very poor records on dropout statistics.

"The Tennessee General Assembly directed the Department of Education in 1984 to reduce the dropout rate by 20 percent by April, 1989, but didn't appropriate any money to collect data," the report says.

Other facts found in the body of report are:

- About 39 percent of all Tennesseans need some type of remedial help.
- As many as two-thirds of the adults in some counties lack a high school education, and even the most literate of counties still has one-third of its population

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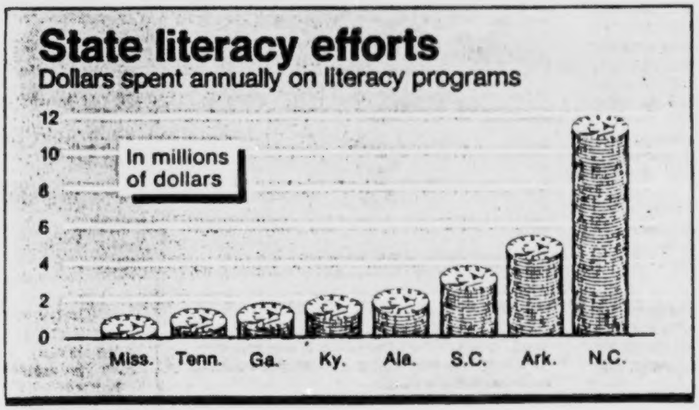


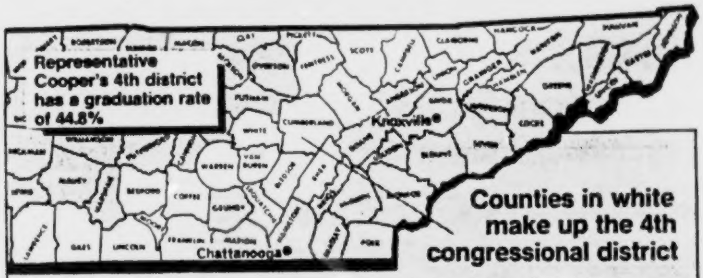
State literacy efforts

Dollars spent annually on literacy programs

SOURCE: 1980 U.S. census

How the states rank

Ranking	State	Percentage of adults 16 years of age and older without a high school degree
41	Louisiana	36.8
42	Alabama	38.0
43	Georgia	38.5
44	Tennessee	38.6
45	West Virginia	38.8
46	North Carolina	39.1
47	Arkansas	39.2
48	Mississippi	39.5
49	South Carolina	39.5
50	Kentucky	41.6



Representative Cooper's 4th district has a graduation rate of 44.8%
Knoxville
Chattanooga

Counties in white make up the 4th congressional district

	State	Area	Percentage
The five congressional districts with the lowest share of high school graduates	Kentucky	Southeast Kentucky	37.7%
	New York	South Bronx	40.0%
	Texas	South Texas	42.0%
	Kentucky	Ashland	42.1%
	New York	Brooklyn	42.1%
The five congressional districts with the highest share of high school graduates	Texas	Dallas, suburbs	88.0%
	California	Irvine-Newport Beach	87.8%
	Maryland	Washington suburbs	87.5%
	Minnesota	Minneapolis	86.8%
	Virginia	Washington suburbs	86.5%

Data are for persons age 25 or older

SOURCE: U.S. Dept. of Commerce

R. Daniel Proctor/News-Sentinel staff

without high school diplomas.

- The state is looking to the federal government to pay for its literacy problems without putting up much of its own money. About $4.5 million was spent on literacy in Tennessee in 1985-86, most of it by the federal government. Of that amount, the state chipped in $700,000, with local governments contributing $300,000 and private groups about $200,000.
- Almost one-quarter of a million people in the state are being overlooked by Adult Basic Education programs.

Cooper says these figures show that Tennessee is a state at risk.

"Literacy hurts us in recruiting new industry and it hurts the productivity of our workers because it is hard for them to keep up with new machinery and new ideas.

"Illiteracy helps to fill up our jails because the illiterate is so frustrated in dealing with life that they turn to crime.

"It fills up our welfare rolls with people who can't get jobs because they don't have skills.

"One conclusion that jumped out at me in the report is that our illiterates cannot compete internationally with other illiterates. You can go to Mexico or Singapore and find those who can do the job for 50 cents an hour.

"Our educated people can compete with anyone in the world. Americans are more innovative and creative and we are a powerhouse when it comes to inventing things and technology. But there is no place in our economy for our illiterates.

"The only jobs that will be left for the illiterate will be the ones we can't import, like sweeping up around a McDonald's."

Cooper said that the average Japanese student goes to school 50 days a year longer than American schoolchildren and that teachers in the Asian world are revered instead of looked down upon, as they are in this country.

"If we told our children they would have to go to school on Saturday, there would be a revolution.

"This is not a problem that we are going to solve overnight. It will take years and people will have to be patient and work toward good solutions. There will have to be willing teachers and willing learners.

"One of the saddest things of all to me is that Tennessee is no longer the Volunteer State. Today, over 1 million of our citizens wouldn't be allowed to volunteer in the military. To think we are losing our reputation over the last several decades.

"It didn't take much to fire a musket, but the military has changed its standards and today you have to be able to understand military manuals to fire a Stinger missile or pilot an airplane. The Army and others have given up trying to teach people how to read.

"The Volunteer State won't be the Volunteer State unless we do something about it now," Cooper said.

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Crime and... illiteracy

Illiteracy, crime link real, officials say

by CARMEN CARTER
News-Sentinel staff writer

Martin "Marty" Weaver was well known to Knoxville juvenile authorities by the time he was 14. His offenses ranged from truancy to assault and battery.

Once, after he got into trouble, authorities tested him and found he had normal intelligence, though he could only read at the second-grade level.

By 16, Weaver had dropped out of school and was using drugs and alcohol almost daily. By 18 he was charged with murder. One year later, in 1985, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to prison.

Not knowing how to read doesn't mean Weaver or anyone else will become a criminal.

Still, Department of Correction officials find the link between a failure in school, illiteracy, crime and juvenile delinquency irrefutable.

"Maybe 20 to 30 percent of the kids coming to us between the ages of 14 and 18 are functioning on a kindergarten to third grade reading level," said Jim Christman, assistant director of education with the state Department of Correction.

"Basically the public schools are so overcrowded the teachers don't have time for problem students. A lot of these kids just get turned off to school somewhere between the fifth to seventh grade.

"Some have already dropped out and they're here because they were picked up by truant officers. They don't suddenly get to the 11th grade and decide they're going to drop out. They've had a culmination of years of negative school experiences."

Up to 90 percent of the state's prison inmates have juvenile records and 70 percent of Tennessee's inmates are illiterate or are high school dropouts, state judicial and correction officials note.

"School is the focus of most of a child's life," said Dr. Diana McCoy, a psychologist who examines children for Knox County Juvenile Court. "When a child's not making it in school and getting further and further behind, then he starts looking for other things to be successful in outside the regular value system."

Truancy may be a smoke screen for learning difficulties.

"You don't see that many hookey players. You have children not going to school because they're having educational problems," said Laurence Gibney, chief probation officer at Knox County Juvenile Court.

How a school system handles truancy may actually contribute to the problem, Gibney said.

"The Knox County schools have social workers who keep up with kids and try to identify why a child is not going to school and they turn to our court as a last resort," said Gibney. On the other hand, "the city schools have a truant officer type to gather up kids and bring them to court," he said.

"We can bring some disciplinary action to bear, but that's not the whole problem. The answer is to help a kid with his reading while someone's making him go to school. We can do something about discipline; we can't teach reading," he said.

However, Jimmy Thacker, truancy administrator for city schools, says city schools make every effort to get children back into classes before taking them and their parents to court.

A multitude of factors, ranging from drug and alcohol abuse to financial problems and a volatile home life, may contribute to both illiteracy and juvenile delinquency. Some teens experiencing problems in school may never get into trouble, especially if they have strong family ties.

"Ethnic groups with strong families usually don't come here, and when they do, they usually don't come back

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through," said Knox County Juvenile Court Judge Carey Garrett.

Both Garrett and Bristol City Juvenile Court Judge Paul Wohlford, president of the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, advocate the need for alternative schools for children who are slow learners and at risk of dropping out.

"We're fortunate in Knoxville to have the Center for Alternative Learning for kids expelled from regular schools," Garrett said. "When there isn't an alternative school and a child is kicked out of school for drugs or whatever, they're just on the street. And many communities in Tennessee don't have alternative schools."

But the Knoxville Junior League believes Knoxville needs another type of alternative school — one with counselors and courses geared to students with slower learning abilities.

"We have an alternative school in Knoxville, but it's punitive (children are sent there only for misbehavior)," said JoAnn Porter of the League's education task force.

"This would be a school for students that maybe can't master all the state requires now, and it would have counselors so that maybe these kids could be educated. Minneapolis has five of these alternative schools."

Wohlford said the Juvenile Judges Council will lobby the state Legislature for funding to help local school boards set up alternative schools.

The judges said the juvenile justice system itself hinders them in helping troubled youngsters, because judges can only remand juveniles to the state Department of Correction for four months at a time.

"If the stated goal of juvenile justice is rehabilitation and not punishment of children who commit wrongs, the state and the system is not effectively doing that," Wohlford said. "We have to do more than simply warehouse them for four months. We need to increase the length of their stay to a minimum of nine months to a year, provide better vocational training . . . and make drug and alcohol treatment available."

Many adolescents who commit delinquent acts are under the influence of alcohol and chemical substances, just as many adult offenders are, Wohlford said. And adolescent drug and alcohol abuse is starting at earlier ages, he said.

About 13 percent of all children in state juvenile courts in 1985 were charged with alcohol and drug offenses, according to the 1985 Tennessee Annual Juvenile Court Statistical Report.

Weaver, the young man sentenced to murder at age 19, told authorities he had used alcohol and Quaaludes — a strong sedative — before the 1983 stabbing. Weaver also told authorities he'd been sniffing paint, glue and gasoline, as well as using alcohol and Quaaludes, since he was 11 years old.

"I've had 11- and 12-year-old alcoholics in my courtroom. I had a 1[illegible]-year-old, arrested for shoplifting glue, who was sniffing three tubes of glue a day," Wohlford said.

The cost of juvenile detention is five times the cost of special or alternative education. Corrections officials say the annual cost of maintaining a juvenile in detention is about $25,550, while the Tennessee Department of Education estimates the annual cost of special education could run between $4,500 and $5,000 per child.

"We're never going to solve adult prison overcrowding and adult crime unless we deal with the juveniles who continue to get into trouble. Ninety percent of the prison inmates have juvenile records or have had contact with the juvenile courts," Wohlford said.

"The people running the system have now become aware of the necessity of dealing with problems on the front end and effectively treating children when they get into trouble, so they're not likely to have these same people get into trouble as adults."

No one will ever know if Marty Weaver's life would have taken a different path had he learned to read and been able to develop a better positive self-image in an alternative school or some other program. But juvenile authorities psychological assessment of Weaver at 13 years old leaves this footnote:

"Some of Marty's acting-out behavior and high absentee rate results in part from his advanced age in relation to his peers, a reputation for being a 'bad guy' and lack of academic achievement and school success."

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Advice from two prisoners: Learn how to read, not rob

by FRED BROWN

News-Sentinel staff writer

When Larry Walden was 10 years old, he decided to leave school in Lenoir City and head out for Marianna, Fla. — in someone else's car.

As far as he could determine there were no other options.

Walden failed to finish the sixth grade and has been in and out of reform school and jail since the age of 10.

Today, he is serving a 15-year sentence in the Morgan County Regional Correction Center near Wartburg for armed robbery and numerous other charges. He has spent 22 of his 36 years behind bars.

Bobby Wilson, 26, another inmate at the center, dropped out of school in the 11th grade. He cannot read well enough to fill out a job application.

Wilson began serving a 25-year sentence for second-degree murder 15 months ago. He agrees with Walden that being illiterate led directly to his problems.

When Walden arrived at the center, a second-grader had a better grasp of the written word.

Today he is a teacher's aide and helps other inmates become better readers.

Wilson always had trouble reading but could write well enough to do odd jobs as a carpenter. He was at a third-grade level the day he swapped his civilian clothes for the blue denim of the center. He reads at a fifth-grade level now.

Thanks to a literacy program within the state Department of Correction, Walden, Wilson and others like them are given the opportunity to complete high school and even take college courses.

There is growing evidence that educating prisoners is a wise investment.

In Tennessee, nearly 70 percent of the inmates have less than an eighth-grade education, which is about the national average. Some education experts say there is a direct relationship between illiteracy and crime.

Walden agrees.

"It seemed after I quit (school) I just went wild. It was easier for me to steal than try to learn," he says.

"If I had stayed in school, I wouldn't have gotten into some of the things I did." Some states, including Tennessee, require inmates to be literate before releasing them. It is known as the "no-read, no-release" experiment.

However, the Tennessee law isn't enforced because of overcrowding.

Christine Bradley, director of education for the Tennessee Department of Correction, says the state is aware of the acute problems of illiteracy, crime and recidivism (repeat offenses). Inmates are encouraged to take advantage of the reading and tutoring programs in prison and to get their General Equivalency Diplomas, she said.

However, only 800 of the 7,000 inmates are involved in the academic programs offered and about half that many take advantage of vocational training.

Bradley says it costs the state about $350 per inmate to bring the academic programs to the jailhouse schoolrooms.

By comparison, it costs state taxpayers $18,500 per year to house one inmate.

Because of the literacy program, Walden says, he is able to read anything that strikes his fancy now. He especially likes science fiction and literature.

Wilson enjoys the Bible and American history and is looking forward to the day he passes the GED.

Both men warn those who have dropped out of school and are thinking of leaving their education on the schoolhouse doorsteps.

"It is a big mistake," Wilson says.

Said Walden: "Going to school, getting a job is a lot better than robbing and stealing."

Both inmates stop short of recommending that inmates be required to pass the GED before being released.

"It has to be on an individual basis," Wilson says. "Some inmates simply can't learn."

Owen Gibson, principal of the literacy program at the center, says mandatory GEDs would not be a good idea because it could mean that some prisoners would never get out.

"It is bad to punish someone if they are just plain, old dumb," he says.

"I think the literacy program does a lot of good. It improves the inmate's self-esteem. So many have never accomplished anything before and the ones who learn to write, it allows them to get something on the outside."

"I wouldn't trade my education for anything," Walden says.

Wilson, a big man with an even bigger smile, says he "couldn't read a lick when I came in here.

"Now, I can."

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The human face of... il·li·ter·a·cy

Trucker follows the road to reading

by **FRED BROWN**
News-Sentinel staff writer

A few months ago, Timothy V. Whaley couldn't distinguish the words one-way from yield.

He was hauling dangerous cargo — toxic waste, high explosives and radioactive products in rigs large enough to demolish a city block.

And he couldn't read the first road sign.

"I was lost out there," Whaley says of his more than 30 years on the ribbon of highways that cut across the country.

Now Whaley is learning to read. But he says there are still thousands of truckers out there pounding the super highways, people who are unable to read the simplest of road signs, or even a map to determine whether or not they are on the right road.

To the illiterate driver, "Stop, Go, Danger, Bridge Out, Detour, Wrong Way and One-Way" might as well be written in a foreign language.

They look like so many scattered letters, like chickens dipped in fingerpaint and made to walk across white paper.

"Once, I was hauling a load of nitroglycerin in Florida. They told me that if it went, there would be a brand new set of Keys in the state."

Whaley dropped out of school in the third grade, saying that he just couldn't keep up and wasn't interested. He began driving one of his father's trucks at 13.

"My teacher told my father that I would never be able to learn. I didn't go half the time," says Whaley. Both his mother and father and the rest of his family were educated and could read well.

Whaley made five trips to Florida with his father, hauling cattle 600 miles from Knoxville to Orlando.

He soloed with a load of calves on the sixth trip.

"I didn't have a license," Whaley says proudly, like the range-riding cowboy he was. "I dodged the weight scales. But, back then, even if you got stopped without a license, the fine was only $15 and there was no such thing as a point system on your driver's license.

"But, I never got a ticket. I was lucky."

By the time he was 17, his father had given him a new B-73 Mack and a Tandy trailer that was 40 feet long.

"I thought I was the king of the road. Well, I was. I passed everything on the road with it."

One year later, he had a chauffeur's license.

He continued the Knoxville to Orlando route for a number of years and came to know the road like you get to know your driveway. He had to. If there were any detours, he was lost.

Later, he had to make trips to other parts of the country, and that presented a problem.

"Someone would have to map out the highways for me. I could read numbers. But I just couldn't read the road signs. But someone could point out a road sign to me and tell me what it meant. Then, I would memorize the way the letters looked. If I saw those letters that same way again, I would know what the word was."

Whaley would get a friend to point out the city where he had to deliver a load.

After memorizing the letters he would figure the distance to the city and then stop just outside town at a truck stop and go to the large city map that truck stops always have.

He would take his papers in to the map, then finger down the index until he found letters that matched the street. He would then find it on the map, checking to see how the letters were placed.

He couldn't read the name of the street, but he could determine if the letters resembled each other.

He would find that street where it was located on the map and then find where he was and then take the most direct route to the street.

"Sometimes, I would have to run the entire length of the street to find the number," he says.

Though he couldn't read, he had a good memory. Once he saw how the letters lined up on a street or directional sign, he would get someone to tell him what it meant, and from that point on, he would know what word those certain letters represented.

Even though he could barely write his name and could read nothing at all, he was not afraid.

"You couldn't afford to be. If you get frightened or scared, then you really are lost. And, in a sense, I was lost all of the time because I couldn't read."

Whaley, sitting in a tiny school chair for students with much smaller frames, told of the time he drove 100 miles on the wrong road in Flagstaff, Ariz., before realizing that he was lost.

"I was out in the middle of nowhere and there was no one to ask. I was dumbfounded. I just turned that big rig around on that two-lane road and drove 100 miles back to find out where I was at.

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"If you become upset, you can't find your way. People like me can't afford to be afraid. If they do, they are just lost.

"You see, we spend all of our lives blanketing our fears to keep people from knowing that we can't read. We put a wall up to protect us to keep people from knowing that we can't read.

"That was my biggest fear, that someone with an education would find out that I couldn't read, that I didn't have an education and look down on me. My wife didn't know I couldn't read for the first three years we were married.

His in-laws, he says, thought he had had at least two years of college.

"I didn't sound illiterate. But it is amazing just how illiterate I was. I'm not dumb. I've always had a good memory. I just couldn't read. I always had friends who were well-educated, and I would listen to them.

"I spent my entire life learning by listening," Whaley says, as his hands twiddle the pages on a children's third-grade reader.

He can read now, thanks to the state's Adult Basic Education program.

In 1985, when he came to an ABE center in Clinton to see Beverly Landguth, he was at ground zero.

"I have never seen a more down and out person," she said.

"I was at the end. I had never been lower," Whaley says.

Two years before, he had had a good long-haul driving job with one of the nation's major carriers. Then, he had a heart attack.

After being off the road for two years, he finally got the OK from his doctor to go back to work.

When he returned for his old job behind the wheel, Whaley discovered the rules had changed.

"I was told that, since I couldn't read, I would not be able to drive a truck. There were new regulations. I would have to pass a test.

"Imagine that. Here I had been driving for more than 30 years and all of a sudden I wasn't qualified."

One of his children requires monthly medical attention, so Whaley knew that he had to do something fast.

"My kids were going hungry. I had reached the bottom. It was either find a long rope and a tall tree, become a good crook, or learn to read."

He began slowly, reading with Pearl Rhea, head of the ABE program in Anderson County, and then with Landguth in Clinton. He went to classes four days a week. He went from a third-grade reading level to a little better than the sixth grade now.

After becoming enrolled in ABE and working to change his life, he began spelling and sounding out words on road signs he saw as he traveled from Knoxville to Clinton, or to see about a job in Chattanooga.

"It might take me 30 miles, but I would get the word figured out," he says proudly.

"I saw that I could learn to read and that there was hope. I just wanted to learn to read. I wanted to read whatever I could pick up.

"And, I want to be able to read to my children, instead of them reading to me," Whaley says.

After making progress in ABE, Whaley found another driving job in Chattanooga for a pharmaceutical firm.

However, before he was signed on, he had to prove that he could read a list of store names that would be on his truck route. He was quite nervous the day he went in to apply for the job.

"I read the first name and stuttered a little. But then, after that, I settled down and read the others. They asked me to read them backwards (from bottom to top). They knew that a non-reader usually has a pretty good memory.

"I read the names backwards to them. Then they asked me to start in the middle. I did, and I read every name.

"I got the job," Whaley says with a big smile.

Now, he has become something of a messenger for those like him who can't read.

"You know, I can spot a person right off who can't read. We all know the little tricks. I tell everyone I can to find a way to learn. It's wonderful to be able to read, to be able to sit down with my children and read to them. My kid still helps me, but I'm learning.

"I can spell now. Before, I couldn't even spell my children's names. I am getting better all the time.

"This has given me a second chance. Being able to read brought me out of the gutter and put me on the third and fourth steps of the ladder," he says.

"There is nothing that I can't do now. I'm on my way to the top of the staircase.

"What does it mean to be able to read?" he says, a tear running down his ruddy and pitted cheek.

"You'll never know."

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'I'll tell you what it's like . . . it's like being blind'

by FRED BROWN
News-Sentinel staff writer

He lives in the illiteracy capital of Tennessee, a remote county in which 60 percent of the adults have no more than an eighth grade education.

He got to the 10th grade and dropped out because he couldn't read, didn't care to and preferred hunting, fishing and trapping.

Now 22, life can be a struggle. He is defensive about his illiteracy, but proud that he is well-educated when it comes to survival.

John (not his real name) lives in Hancock County, where he has many friends who graduated from Hancock County High School. John didn't bother to look over his shoulder the day he walked out. He is married and has a steady job in a county that is ranked as being one of the nation's poorest and as having one of the country's highest illiteracy rates.

Of the adult population, 71.4 percent have less than 12 years of education. Few go on to college, since 31 percent of the students never reach the 12th grade.

John says his teachers didn't like him and promoted him just to get him out of their classes.

"When I couldn't read a word, they would say, 'sure, you can read that.' I would tell 'em that I couldn't and they would keep saying I could. I would just get mad.

"They would send me to the corner of the room and give me crayons. Can you imagine that?

"Something happens when it comes to reading. I just get mad and can't. I can count, but I can't read."

John can write his name, barely, but not much else.

"I'll tell you what it is like out here without being able to read or write. It's like (being) blind. I know what it is to be blind. It's just like closing your eyes and trying to cross the street."

But he takes it philosophically.

"If you can't read, there is no sense in worrying about it. If you can't do something, then you can't do it."

Hancock County is stuck between two ridges, the Cumberland Mountains to the north and the Clinch Mountains to the south.

There is only one town in the county, Sneedville, which is home of Hancock County High School.

Mike Antrican, school superintendent, is well aware of his county's educational problems, but says there may be no other way to proceed.

"Did you come over the mountain to get to us?" he asks. "You know how hard it is to get into here then. For years, we had a politican who complained to the state to build us a road in here. When he couldn't get us a road in, he asked the state to at least build us a road out."

Antrican, born in Hancock County and a graduate of the University of Tennessee, is defensive about his school system and his county.

"I know 85 percent of the families in this county," he says. "We are isolated. We have an elementary school that doesn't have 100 students a day. We have a low per capita income ($10,635), but they don't have to make much money to grow gardens, kill hogs and hunt and eat wild meat.

"For many of our people it is hard to see why they should force a kid to go to school when in their view they are living comfortably," Antrican says.

"I know many farmers who buy a new car each year, maybe a tractor. And they do that on an eighth grade education. They are functioning within their own . . . values and are living pretty good."

Antrican and the former coordinator for literacy in the county, Greg Marion, point out that the county has one of the lowest teen pregnancy rates in the state. A handful of its students will go on to distiguish themselves in college, they say. Many residents volunteer to help children with music, foreign languages and other subjects, they say.

"We will have a graduating class of about 90 to 100, and about 30 percent of them will go on to college," said Marion.

The superintendent says the county has a small manufacturing plant that turns out table tops, chairs, electric motors for washing machines and a crafts industry.

"Even if we had a Nissan plant, we would have to go out and hire sheet metal workers," he says.

Antrican says demographics work against his county.

In the 1940s and '50s, the county had 40 schools. Today it has one high school and five elementary schools. Four decades ago there were 15,000 to 16,000 people in the county. Today there are 6,700.

Some children have over an hour's drive going to and coming from school.

"Some spend as much as three hours a day on the bus and then have to walk a quarter of a mile home," he says.

"As an educator, I'd like for everyone to be able to read and to write, but in Hancock County I think you have to take a second look at that," he says.

He says that there is job training provided by the state and Adult Basic Education for those who want it.

He says lack of money is one of the biggest problems. He runs the system on about $2 million a year. Of that, the county puts in roughly $230,000, he says.

"The average salary for a teacher in Newport (Cocke County) is $20,000. In Jefferson County, they spend $1,839 per student. I spend $1,772. That is a big difference.

"A beginning teacher here earns $14,500 a year," Antrican says."That qualifies them for food stamps.

"We are being left behind by the technical revolution. We will have to change some basic values and attitudes if we are to change," he says.

A teacher in Hancock County High School, who asked that her name not be used, says, "Education is not the primary concern of many people here.

"I assume that all my students love learning. . . but it isn't true."

She says many students look to their parents as examples. If they have done well and didn't complete high school, then there is not much incentive.

"We are doing the job the best we can with what we have. The children have to be exposed and then it is up to them. It isn't the schools' or the parents' fault. It is both," she says.

"It is an individual commitment to learning. Sometimes I think the problem is that this county is bilingual.

"I can say, 'I did, I did, I did,' all day and when the student goes home it will be, 'I done, I done, I done.'

"Until students can see that their everyday speaking language and their classroom language are the same, we won't change much. One of my objectives is to make them aware of the difference.

"That's why I say this goes back to their culture. You have to be exposed and that's the key, and once exposed you have to have an increased awareness or you will never improve.

"But, my students tell me, almost daily, 'as long as I communicate, what difference does it make?' "

It makes all the difference in the world to John.

He says he knows he should have continued with school and is making certain his 8-year-old son does.

"I wouldn't be able to survive in your world," John says.

"But then, you wouldn't last a day in these hills if someone were to just drop you out in the middle of the forest.

"Me, I can survive."

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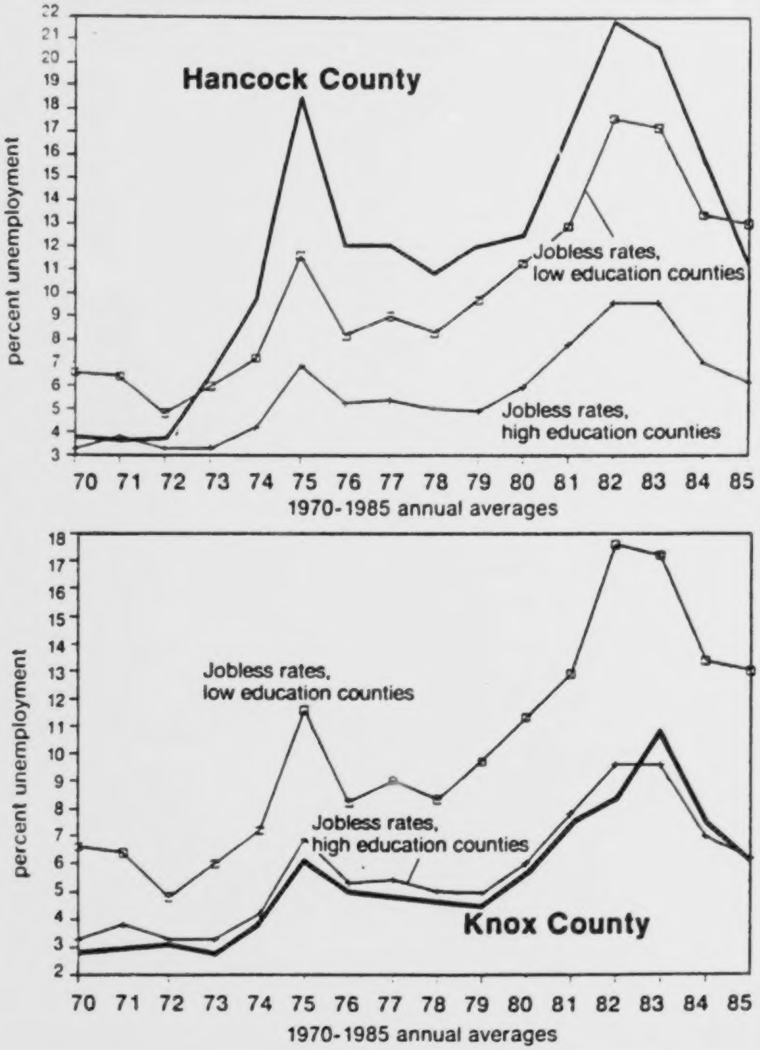
Lack of education equals high unemployment rates

The charts show the unemployment rates in Knox and Hancock counties, then compare those rates with the unemployment rates in twenty Tennessee counties with the highest educational levels and the twenty counties with the lowest education levels.



SOURCE: 1980 U.S. Census

R. Daniel Proctor/News-Sentinel staff

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The human face of... illiteracy

Left behind

Learning disabilities close books to some children

by **CARMEN CARTER**
News-Sentinel staff writer

Classmates teased and ridiculed John Carpenter because he couldn't read. He was held back in the second and third grades. In the eighth grade, Carpenter says, Knoxville school officials told him to just stay home and report to Van Gilder Occupational Training Center in the fall.

He dropped out of school. Fifteen years later, a medical examination following an industrial accident revealed that Carpenter, 31, suffers from dyslexia — a reading impairment caused by a genetic defect or brain injury.

Dyslexics usually see letters and numbers backwards, though the condition can often be corrected through the use of glasses and eye exercises.

Until recently, Tennessee schools did not have standard evaluation procedures to identify dyslexia and a range of other learning disabilities. About 5 percent of school children in Tennessee have learning disabilities, says Victor Akel, director of student and program evluations for the Tennessee Department of Education.

The lack of tests condemned Carpenter and many others of his generation to lives of illiteracy.

Experts also say the once-common practice of advancing students with their peers, regardless of whether they could do the work, has contributed to the ranks of the illiterate.

Nationally, as many as 10 percent of high school graduates are illiterate, according to the Adult Performance Level Project survey. In Tennessee, the State Board of Regents found 66 percent of all freshmen in community colleges needed remedial courses in at least one area.

"I just thought there was something that wouldn't let me read like normal people could," Carpenter said. "My parents hid the fact I was held back from the rest of the family. When I had an IQ test, I had a high IQ. Cher (the singer) has got it and there are scientists that have it," said the father of three.

Carpenter says he has spent his life doing manual labor jobs because of his illiteracy.

When Carpenter was in school, the state had no criteria for evaluating "exceptional children," said Wanda Moody, who served as assistant commissioner of special education in Gov. Lamar Alexander's administration.

Under Moody's direction, the Department of Education completed an evaluation manual in 1983 now being used by schools to help identify children with learning problems.

Along with improved evaluations, Tennessee schools are again stressing fundamentals, said Moody, now a special assistant to Knoxville Mayor Kyle Testerman.

"We've just gotten back to the basics in the last six to eight years and we went through a period a good 10 years before where we didn't worry about a child's skill level," Moody said.

"We didn't have as much emphasis on (skill level) in the primary grades. By not having that emphasis, you had a bunch of kids that, once they got into junior high school, they obviously couldn't do what was expected. They became disgruntled, unhappy discipline problems and many went on and dropped out."

Because of the new evaluation procedures adopted in 1983, there should be far fewer John Carpenters in Tennessee public schools. But Moody is quick to point out that, unless a teacher recognizes a child is having problems, and unless the pupil's parent agrees to let school officials run learning disability tests — that child can still slip thorugh the cracks.

Educators also say that testing and encouragement from teachers is no substitute for parental involvement.

"If a student comes from a background where there is no expectation, incentive, or push from home to graduate, then they're more vulnerable to becoming a dropout statistic," said Brent Poulton, executive director of the state Board of Education. "I'm not quite sure what we can do about that in the school setting."

Moody says the phenomena of promoting children with their peers — even if they were unprepared for the next grade — came out of the colleges of education during the 1950s and 1960s, and not from state or local school officials.

"We went through a period of social promotions where it was commonly accepted that you pass a child from grade to grade to keep the child with his or her peer group," Moody said. "There wasn't as much emphasis on academics as we have now."

However, state school board members are attempting to quash social promotions with a policy adopted last year that requires every local school system to develop a promotion and retention policy along state board guidelines.

After the discovery of his learning disability, Carpenter contacted the Knox County Schools Adult Basic Education Program for tutoring. He now reads at a sixth-grade level. Carpenter is physically disabled from an on-the-job accident, but is developing capabilities he never knew he had.

"I started working with my tutor six months ago and from nothing in math I'm working in algebra. He said I'm real gifted," Carpenter said. "I was hurt at work and don't want to stay home and draw Social Security. I'd like to work programming or repairing computers."

Moody emphasizes that classroom teachers must be trained to recognize the symptoms that no one recognized when Carpenter was in school.

"Before we're going to see any very dramatic results, we need to concentrate some of our effort on helping classroom teachers identify those symptoms in the classroom, so they can refer those children for further evaluations," Moody said.

University of Tennessee economics professor Dr. George Spiva agrees. He says it could be a decade before the benefits of improvements in the education system, such as the Better Schools Program, were apparent.

The Better Schools Program adopted by Gov. Alexander in 1984 established a core curriculum of basic skills for Tennessee school children. It requires regular skills tests and offers career advancement at higher pay to state teachers.

"Our recent history is one of us coming to understand just how important education is to individuals, communities and the state. There's a relationship between education and economic prosperity," Poulton said.

"To be uneducated is to be assigned to second class economic status. We're coming of age in recognizing the importance of education. We need to rely on the strength of the argument that education is good for the individual and the community."

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My Name is Shirley Before. I went to School

Shirley's story

'Now is your chance'

Mark Crosten, News-Sentinel staff

Shirley Cosby, 34, dropped out of the eighth grade in Claiborne County 20 years ago to work as a waitress. She couldn't read. This past September, she decided to change that.

She signed up with the Private Industry Council's general equivalency diploma program in Knoxville. Now she reads and writes well enough that she agreed to our request to write about her experiences for this special section.

The bulk of the letter she wrote is reproduced here. There are a few mistakes, as there are in most letters The News-Sentinel receives. It is also an eloquent testimonial.

"I feel a lot better about myself now," Cosby says. "I've wanted to work and better myself. I've been on assistance about four years and it's no life at all not to have an education or job skill."

I was just a person. I was from a family of 8 Children. I thought When I WAS 14 years old Being Out of School was Alright. That WAS my first mistake Now I Am 34. All them years I went without my Education. I was working some as A waitress. I was trying To raise two Children with nothing. They would ask me to help them do homework. It hurt to Say I don't Know how, But I didn't Know how! There is nothing wrong Now. I started School in Sept of 86. I now have my High School Diploma Know one will ever Know what that done to my life Everyone at School was wonderful in helping me adjust to a New life. And my feelings Now are different I Know the things now that give back the Knoweldge of this world. So people out there that CAN't read or write this is for you My picture shows the difference in me. So if you are interested in getting a new start on life Now is your Chance You CAN get in touch with the world you CAN start by going back to School And if you have Chidren you CAN help them out So just think one decision CAN make A life.

Shirley Cosby

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Jobs few for those who can't read

by CARMEN CARTER
News-Sentinel staff writer

It is hard for a person who can't read to find a job.

And it will only get worse.

For illiterates and high school dropouts, unemployment and underemployment will be a permanent condition by the year 2000, employment officials say.

"There are a lot of garages where a good mechanic doesn't have to have gone through a school if he knows what he's doing," said Jerry Upchurch, executive director of Employment Security Administration in Knoxville.

"But they're going to have to get more training or be out of a job soon. In 20 years, someone will have to have college computer training to be an auto mechanic (due to the use of micro chips in cars)."

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that, by the year 2000, there will be few high-wage, unskilled jobs, because industries needing only basic skills will increasingly go abroad. Only workers with job skills will win high American wages.

That trend is already evident. Statewide, unemployment is higher today than a decade ago because of Tennessee's reliance on manufacturing, says Dr. William Fox of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee. Today's 8 percent jobless rate is double the 4 percent rate of the 1970s.

Manufacturing jobs represent 19.9 percent of the national economy but 26.3 percent of the economy in Tennessee, Fox said.

"The shift in manufacturing jobs affects us more because we started out with more jobs, so it hurts us a little bit more than other parts of the country," he said.

Tennessee has lost 46,000 manufacturing jobs since 1978, according to Fox.

By 1990, three out of four jobs will require some education or technical training beyond high school, according to the state Department of Employment Security.

Computers and computer-controlled equipment are penetrating virtually every facet of American life, from homes to factories and offices. The government estimates that by the turn of the century millions of jobs will involve laser technology and robotics.

Previous options for hard-working illiterates and high school dropouts are already on the wane. The military, many fast food chains, factories, garages and even janitorial services are already demanding better reading skills and higher education levels.

"Even for cooks and waitresses, there's a certain amount of reading in most jobs," said Libby Burchell, a counselor at the Department of Employment Security in Knoxville. "Even with signs on jobs, or posting instructions, people who can't read are lost."

The United States armed forces no longer accept high school dropouts unless they can pass a written test with scores higher than a high school graduate.

A 1977 U.S. General Accounting Office report concluded that recruits with poor reading skills have higher discharge rates, have more trouble with training, don't perform as satisfactorily, and lack potential for career advancement.

"It's not easy to get into the service," said Capt. Larry Gladden, U.S. Army recruiting commander in Knoxville. "Less than 10 percent of everyone we take into the Army now is a person without a high school diploma.

"It just makes sense with the sophisticated electronic equipment you've got to be able to read more efficiently and comprehend what you read. Anybody can pull a trigger, but you've got to be able to read maps and move fast."

Some steps taken in Tennessee should work to improve the state's stature in the business world, including the Better Schools Program. That program focuses on basic skills in every grade and requires periodic testing to measure student progress.

Between 1980 and and 1983, the University of Tennessee's Center for Business and Economic Research surveyed 537 manufacturing firms that expanded or developed new sites in Tennessee. Most considered schools here poor of quality.

In December 1986, an updated survey of 848 manufacturing firms showed that Tennessee was chosen as a plant site in large part because of the Better Schools Program, said Fox.

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Schools see more literate future

by CARMEN CARTER

News-Sentinel staff writer

Local school officials hope to bank some hefty dividends from several new programs aimed at reducing dropout rates while improving the reading ability of high school graduates.

A combination of computers, pizza parties, reading contests and the state Better Schools Program should push up reading scores of high school graduates and reduce the number of dropouts by the year 2000, Knoxville and Knox County school officials say. Most of the programs started in the past five years.

"With the changes being made, it's less likely we'll have people dropping out in the 10th and 11th grade and reading on a third-grade level," said Dr. Belva Holleman, Knoxville City Schools reading supervisor. "We will have identified them early. The problem many years ago was that children could fake their way through because they were good listeners. Our testing programs keep them from doing that."

City and county schools are using computers for a variety of subjects, including reading at the primary level through high school. In city schools, even kindergartners are using computers to get a head start in reading.

Educators are focusing attention on children in kindergarten through third grade to instill good reading skills.

"(This) is where your adult literacy and dropout rates happen," said state Board of Education chairman Nelson Andrews. "If you want to solve the adult literacy problem, you have to start in those early grades."

Last year city schools began using IBM's "Writing To Read" computer labs in a pilot program for kindergartners and first graders at Belle Morris and Beaumont elementary schools.

The IBM program is a sensory learning experience full of bright colors and the sounds of letter combinations. Computers and typewriters are used to overcome the difficulties some young children experience in learning to write.

"They still write like 5-year-olds," said Tracy Hazelwood, a kindergarten teacher at Belle Morris. "But if they have a speech problem it comes out in the way they sound out words in their writing. The program allows children to work at their own pace and now I have children picking up books and excitedly saying, 'I know this word!' "

City and county schools also use computers to teach reading by playing word games, spelling games and by allowing children to write stories using multiple choice verbs and nouns.

Students write and illustrate their own books through the "Celebrate Literacy Awards," sponsored by the Tennessee Chapter of the International Reading Association. City and county students, from elementary to high school, write and illustrate books that are judged according to age groups, Holleman said.

Pizza Hut's "Book-It" program provides participating city and county schools with pizza parties after children complete reading goals set by teachers. Other resources educators call upon to improve reading include:

■ Community Read-ins in city schools are week-long events that bring community leaders, politicians, sports and media people into the elementary schools to read to children. "The purpose is to show children a role model reading," Holleman said.

■ Reading is Fundamental, a national organization that helps provide free books for students, is offered through the county.

■ Both city and county schools use remedial reading teachers who travel from school to school, giving special help to children with reading problems.

City and county officials say standard curriculums adopted by the school systems have helped improve student reading and performance in other subjects.

Both school systems started a basic skills curriculum and testing program before the state's Better Schools Program in 1984 made it mandatory.

While city-county test scores are improving, pockets of students and some schools continue to score low.

For those students, both systems are piloting the Effective Schools Program, which aims to ensure that every child will learn by increasing teachers' expectations of students; providing strong leadership from school principals; emphasizing basic skills and providing a positive learning environment and student assessments.

County Schools Superintendent Earl Hoffmeister has assured city school officials that the Knoxville Effective Schools Program will remain intact after the two systems merge in July.

City and county officials are hopeful that the reading programs and incentives will pay off in literate adults.

Andrews cautions that constant vigilence is needed.

"I think there's some hope that it's going to get better," he said.

"It's not going to get dramatically better unless we, over an extended period of time, put resources into grades kindergarten through 12.

"If we don't keep doing it, though, we'll go right back to where we were. It's like trying to turn an ocean liner around — it takes a lot of momentum and a lot of water to even get it nudged around."

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The education-employment link

County	1984-86 avg. annual unemployment	1980 percent of population in poverty	1980 percent of adults w/less than 12 years education
Anderson	7.60 %	14.5 %	37.8 %
Bledsoe	7.32	24.2	60.4
Blount	8.23	12.7	42.9
Bradley	8.57	13.9	47.0
Campbell	16.36	24.8	62.5
Carter	9.39	18.8	53.0
Claiborne	10.35	29.3	61.2
Cocke	22.48	27.5	59.9
Cumberland	12.47	21.9	55.6
Fentress	15.87	33.5	66.4
Grainger	11.96	22.9	65.6
Greene	11.31	18.0	52.5
Hamblen	10.19	15,6	49.0
Hancock	14.63	43.0	71.4
Hawkins	8.25	18.3	52.9
Jefferson	11.43	17.1	51.7
Johnson	14.38	26.5	63.5
Knox	6.73	14.7	35.6
Loudon	10.03	12.8	51.3
McMinn	10.73	16.0	52.7
Meigs	13.52	14.3	56.6
Monroe	12.49	19.4	60.8
Morgan	14.78	25.7	59.5
Polk	12.32	19.4	59.3
Rhea	10.35	19.7	52.7
Roane	8.30	13.2	45.9
Scott	17.63	28.6	62.3
Sevier	15.55	15.1	49.1
Sullivan	7.44	12.9	43.0
Unicoi	9.51	15.0	54.8
Union	9.07	24.3	63.8
Washington	8.27	14.1	42.8

SOURCE: Appalachian Regional Commission

R. Daniel Proctor/News-Sentinel staff

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Some educators believe system distorts dropout figures

by CARMEN CARTER
News-Sentinel staff writer

The federal government has spent a lot of money trying to solve illiteracy and school dropout problems.

That could be part of the problem, a Knoxville educator says.

All that grant money has encouraged state school districts to inflate dropout numbers, said Bill Orr, Knox County Schools administrator of service and attendance.

"Between the 1950s and 1970s, school districts were getting grant money based on need," said Orr.

"The higher the dropout rate, the greater the need, the more possibility of getting a grant," Orr said. "Some of the state systems got excessive amounts of money and there were even competitions between school systems. Now Tennessee is having problems because (the dropout rate) has been made so high. Nashville's telling us we're having trouble getting employers here because we have too many dropouts."

Many states, including Tennessee, determine the dropout rate by subtracting the number of graduates from the number of incoming freshmen. At best, that is an imprecise measure of how many students drop out, he said.

Adding to the confusion, Orr said, state officials have no standard definition of the term dropout. Instead, local school systems use 19 classifications for why a student leaves school.

The dropout rate in Knox County schools actually is closer to 10 or 15 percent rather than the 25 to 30 percent the state reports, he said, simply because of the way the state counts dropouts. The state includes all transfers, suspensions and home-taught students in dropout statistics, he said.

Jimmy Thacker, administrative coordinator of pupil personnel for Knoxville schools, said there is no way to know the true dropout rate unless you know why the student isn't in school.

"At this time, the state says we have anywhere from a 20 to 25 percent dropout rate," Thacker said. "But you can take any of those figures and look real close and you might find 10 to 15 percent of those kids have pursued education somewhere else."

Sidney Owen, public information officer of the State Department of Education, agreed that the state's data collection isn't precise.

"Our numbers don't tell us which students went out of state, to another school, died or entered a private school. But we know that the number reaching 12th grade is lower than the number entering ninth grade," Owen said.

"It is not a true dropout rate. The Department of Education is working on a computerized accounting system that, when completed, could give us more specific information on the reasons students leave and give us a truer picture of the dropout rate in Tennessee."

James Robinson, director of federal programs for Knox County schools, is preparing a federal grant on a proposal that could for the first time provide the state with specific data on Knox County dropouts.

In addition, the Knoxville Junior League, with funding from the Private Industry Council, has set up an advisory dropout task force with representatives of business, civic, and city/county schools. The league set up a volunteer pilot project in October at Rule and Doyle high schools to find out why students drop out. The group will reveal the results at the end of the school year, said JoAnn Parker of the League.

Also in the fall, the league will begin its At School Advocacy Program to discourage ninth graders from dropping out by showing them the connection between education and jobs, Parker said.

"We've got to start tracking children from Head Start through the 12th grade," said Robinson. "If we can't identify children (at risk) earlier, we're going to continue to have problems."

Orr said identifying potential dropouts should help make better use of existing education resources.

Meanwhile, some educators elsewhere in the nation see another problem with the big federal grants made over the past 15 to 20 years that were aimed at fighting illiteracy and dropout rates.

Marva Collins, headmaster of the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago, said in an Insight magazine article the federal money allowed school systems to label children as remedial or in need of special education until only a few were considered normal. New programs for these children resulted in schools throwing out basic textbooks and replacing them "with pictures and watered-down vocabularies, and soon we reaped a crop of illiterates," Collins said.

Mike Brunner, a senior associate with the National Institute of Education in Washington, D.C., is more blunt.

"If we were preparing students, there wouldn't be a market for the paraprofessionals, teachers and administrators of Chapter I (the federal remedial reading program) or for publishers to make their money off of these look-say textbooks with incidental phonics thrown in.

"Too many people are profiting from illiteracy — more than $3 billion a year from the Chapter I funds alone," Brunner said.

He cited research by Dr. Jeanne Chall in her book, "Learning To Read," that showed the Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Mesa, Ariz. paying $23.42 per student on reading materials in 1978. The same year, teachers were trained in phonetics, and by 1981 the cost of reading materials dropped to $8.50, he said.

"Publishers make their money off of the workbooks more than hardback books, which last for five years," Brunner said. "The workbooks have to be bought every year. The regular classrooms are using them (workbooks) too. The publishers were delighted when Chapter I came in in 1965."

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The solutions to... illiteracy

Non-traditional programs seek to get word to adults

by CARMEN CARTER
News-Sentinel staff writer

A handful of programs in Knox County are set up outside traditional education systems to help people learn the skills necessary to get a job.

They include the Knoxville Opportunities Industrialization Center, the Private Industry Council's General Equivalency Diploma program and Job Corps. Each program is designed to assist unemployed, underemployed and unskilled adults.

The Private Industry Council's program focuses on basic skills, including math, reading and language arts classes to prepare the program's 288 students for high school equivalency degree courses. Students with less than a fifth grade reading level are referred to the county schools Adult Basic Education program before entering.

Last year the program turned out 111 GED graduates in classes at Mechanicsville-Lonsdale-Beaumont Community Building. The program was established through the Joint Training Partnership Act by Congress and receives state and federal funds.

Instructors say some students are so motivated they dread missing classes.

"We had one woman who went into labor in class and another had a baby on Friday and came to class on Monday. We had to tell her to go home," said Cecilia Waters, who directs the high school equivalency program.

KOIC, at 801 Gratz St., offers basic education and vocational skills at no charge and helps students find evening employment so they can attend day classes.

Part of a national network of 200 centers, KOIC teaches job skills and basic skills to anyone at least 17 years old, unemployed, underemployed or unskilled.

It is funded through donations from business and also gets help from the city, county and TVA.

"Sometimes we have people who come in and can work on cars, but they can't read and write," ~~said LeRoi~~ Brandenberg, KOIC director. "We're getting into an age where cars are computerized. When we talk about handicapped people, we need to remember that illiteracy is a handicap."

The Job Corps is a 23-year-old government training program originally set up for high school dropouts. Now about 60 percent of the young adults in its 123 centers nationwide are high school graduates, says Job Corps recruiter Bob Dickson. He says many high school graduates he sees are close to the illiteracy line.

Anyone from a low-income home between the ages of 16 and 22 can qualify for the basic education course, GED program, job training courses and job experience offered at Knoxville's Job Corps Center, on the campus of Knoxville College. The residential program offers room and board, a small stipend, and training in several job areas.

Although the average Job Corps recruit comes in reading at the sixth-grade level, others must start from scratch.

"When they come in my classroom, they're upset when they see the alphabet on the wall. They say they don't belong in my room," said Lois LeFlore, the basic skills reading teacher for Job Corps.

"I take them aside and tell them not to be ashamed, this is their second chance in life and they should take it!"

Hubert Garrison, 17, of Memphis, started the Job Corps program seven months ago at a third-grade reading level. He is expected to complete his GED in March and has already passed the Navy's military examination. Garrison had been classified a special education student in school.

"If I hadn't come here, I probably would've been hanging around with the wrong crowd," Garrison said. "It's helped me out a lot because I played in high school and I'm learning more here. They don't give you grades here like in high school — you have to earn them."

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The solutions to... il·lit·eracy

Some employers offer help

by CARMEN CARTER
News-Sentinel staff writer

During her more than 20 years of marriage, Shirley Sanders was a housewife who depended on her husband for the simple things — such as reading cooking instructions from a pancake mix box or directions from medicine bottles.

Sanders says her husband didn't think it would do any good to go back to school.

Then a week before her divorce was final, Sanders applied for work as a housekeeper at St. Mary's Medical Center in Knoxville.

She was lucky. After telling the interviewer she couldn't read, St. Mary's last summer arranged to teach Sanders and five other employees.

Now Sanders is planning to get a General Equivalency Diploma, a driver's license, and pursue a nursing career.

St. Mary's, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville city government, Goodwill Industries and Browning-Ferris Industries are among a few Knoxville area employers offering employee literacy programs, says Jane Cody, director of Knox County's adult literacy program. Most started within the past year.

Cody says the County Schools Adult Basic Education program can provide materials and volunteer tutors to interested employers.

"It's a service available to all agencies and businesses," Cody said.

Emma Lou Elkins, supervisor of Adult Basic Education for Knoxville schools, has had little response enlisting employers.

"Most employers expect employees to go on their own time. But I think more employers would come forward if the employees wouldn't fake it and just let them know (they can't read)."

Mary Rimer, a training and development counselor at St. Mary's who tutors for the program, said, "It's very difficult for adults to acknowledge that they're having trouble."

The University of Tennessee has two employee literacy programs — the university's Adult Basic Skills Center, which tutors about 12 employees, and a literacy program specifically for the university's physical plant employees, offered through the county ABE office.

"Some of our best craftsmen have reading problems," said John Parker, executive director of the physical plant. "I'm sure this will help these people personally, but it'll also help us because they'll be better employees."

The Adult Basic Skills Center tutors university employees in reading and math on employee time, said Lana Shelton, center director. "We teach them coping skills, like how to read a medicine bottle, how to read a recipe, how to write a check, or how to write a letter to someone," Shelton said

Knoxville's service and fleet management departments started a literacy class last month for seven employees, said David Proffitt, a human resource analyst for the Civil Service Merit Board. The class is taught through the Knoxville Schools Adult Basic Education Program.

"One employee wanted to learn to read the Bible, another wanted to be able to read to his child at home and another employee was interested in a night job, but couldn't take the test because he couldn't read well enough," Proffitt said.

Browning-Ferris Industries began an employee literacy program one year ago when district manager Tom Wells realized he couldn't promote good employees because they couldn't read.

The county Adult Basic Education program provides teachers and materials, though BFI pays during the summer months when the program shuts down.

Goodwill Industries provides 10 of its physically and emotionally handicapped trainees and employees with literacy training through the county ABE.

The Knox County Library System has applied for a $20,000 federal grant to hire a part-time person to coordinate Cody's efforts with local businesses. If the grant is received, the library would match the $20,000.

"The basic idea is to get employers involved in allowing relief time so employees can volunteer to be trained as tutors and then work a certain number of hours each week with other employees," said Helen Grant, head of the Knox County Branch Library Services.

Employers have a stake in the literacy level of the local work force.

"We believe the key to all this is the employer," said Grant. "Sometimes it's difficult to convince an employer that a little investment on the front end might make a big difference in the long run."

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Newspapers, press groups fighting illiteracy across nation

by SUSAN ALEXANDER
News-Sentinel public service director

The News-Sentinel and its parent company, Scripps Howard, have dedicated both time and money to the fight against illiteracy.

The effort is one of several by newspapers and newspaper industry groups to help millions of illiterate Americans learn to read.

In 1986 Scripps Howard announced a company-wide commitment to combat the problem. The Scripps Howard Foundation, which traditionally donates money to journalism programs and students, broadened its scope to include established literacy programs.

Scripps Howard and The Scripps Howard Foundation gave $122,000 to literacy projects in 1986.

The News-Sentinel applied for a literacy grant on behalf of the Knox County Program for Adult Literacy (PAL), and last month presented a $10,000 Foundation check to PAL director Jane Cody.

Prior to receiving the grant, Cody's 1986-87 school year budget was roughly $20,000, an inadequate amount because it was calculated on 115 literacy students, the number Cody saw between June 1985 and May 1986. So far this school year, because of the publicity literacy has received, nearly 300 adults have reached her in the hopes of learning to read.

"This grant has permitted us to provide basic materials for all our students, rather than having them share books, and it has supplied the funds to purchase supplemental reading materials as well," Cody says.

"The supplemental books teach basic survival skills. They cover things like how to follow a recipe or write a check or complete a job application."

Just as important as supplying books, the grant will allow the PAL office to operate year-round rather than for nine months.

"That is very important to us because it extends our tutoring services to more people," Cody says.

In addition, PAL has purchased charts and manuals for its volunteer tutors and hired a part-time employee to field calls and enroll students in the literacy program. Before the year is out, Cody hopes to establish a newsletter for tutors which also can be used as a teaching tool for their students.

The News-Sentinel's commitment to the issue does not end with the Foundation grant. Through news coverage and public service programs, it has continued to encourage literacy.

Last November, along with B. Dalton Booksellers, the newspaper sponsored a book fair in honor of Lawson McGhee Library's 100th anniversary.

This year in the city's Adopt-A-School program, it is focusing its efforts on Knox County high school students who have been unable to pass the state language arts proficiency test, a requirement to graduate.

It also sponsors a variety of programs at all levels in the schools to encourage learning and recognize those students who excel.

"Reading is crucial to survival today," says Editor Harry Moskos, "and The News-Sentinel stands firmly in support of education, whether you're talking about fourth graders competing in a spelling bee or adults putting forth the effort to learn to read now.

"This special section just reemphasizes our concern about literacy. Educating our citizens is something we all must care about," Moskos says.

A number of other literacy programs are offered through newspapers:

- The American Society of Newspaper Editors has formed a literacy committee to inform and encourage newspapers to support local literacy campaigns.
- The American Newspaper Publishers Association has launched a "Press to Read" campaign through its Newspaper-in-Education program to help newspapers custom design or expand literacy projects in their communities.
- Cox Newspapers is launching a pilot literacy project through its flagship, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, to be used at other Cox newspapers.
- The Gannett Foundation has contributed more than $1.2 million since 1980 to literacy programs.
- The Knight Foundation has contributed funds to expand a joint community college and county government literacy project in Charlotte, N.C. With funds from the Knight Foundation, linked to the Knight-Ridder Newspapers chain, Project ABLE has added a new literacy center at a minimum-security prison.
- The broadcast media also has joined the fight with Project Literacy U.S. (Project PLUS). PLUS broadcasts programs aimed at teaching basic skills to adult viewers. Spearheaded by ABC-TV and PBS, the project urges other radio and television networks and stations to join the literacy campaign.

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Illiteracy a problem for all

by **HARRY MOSKOS**
Editor, The Knoxville News-Sentinel

State Rep. Joe May, R-Knoxville, is one of a growing number of Tennesseans concerned about the repercussions of illiteracy.

It hurts, May says, when a state such as Tennessee has a million people defined as illiterate.

Illiteracy, he notes, makes it difficult to attract new industry to this state.

He's right.

The problem is not limited to Tennessee, however.

Secretary of Labor Bill Brock says this nation faces the worst skill shortage in its labor force since World War II.

About one in five American adults cannot read or write English well enough to cope in everyday life.

According to PLUS, the acronym for Project Literacy U.S., 16 percent of whites over age 18 are illiterate, 44 percent of blacks over age 18 are illiterate, and 56 percent of Hispanics over age 18 are illiterate.

These statistics are shocking.

Even more shocking is the fact that the number of illiterates is growing daily. PLUS estimates that between 2.3 and 2.5 million adults join the ranks of the functionally illiterate each year.

By functionally illiterate, we mean an adult who cannot read a medicine bottle, use a phone book, understand a bus schedule, fill out a job application, or even make change for a $20 bill.

One of the first officials in the state to express serious concern about this acute problem was U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper, a Democrat representing the 4th District, who was instrumental in forming the Legislative Task Force on Illiteracy.

The task force is hoping for a substantial decline in the number of Tennessee illiterates by the year 2000.

"We didn't put an exact figure, but we are probably looking at 100,000 to 200,000 fewer illiterates between now and the year 2000," the congressman says.

Tennessee is called the Volunteer State, Cooper says, because so many citizens have volunteered to serve in past wars.

He adds:

"We are no longer the Volunteer State unless we solve the illiteracy problem because the U.S. Army doesn't want you if you haven't graduated from high school. More than a million Tennesseans are disqualified from military service. We are good at shooting muskets, but when it comes to Stinger missiles we haven't kept up. We have lost that reputation."

What Tennessee needs now is volunteers to fight the war of illiteracy.

This special section calls attention to the problem. It also focuses on efforts and programs that aim to at least reduce the problems, if not eliminate it.

We can write about it, but we need you to do something about it.

You can express your concerns to your state and federal representatives.

You can call the state Literacy Hotline listed on this page and volunteer to be a tutor. You will be referred to a program near you.

You can call local literacy councils and other literacy programs listed on this page and see if they need time, money or materials you might provide.

Illiteracy is everyone's problem. We must all be part of the solution.

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WATE offers reading series

WATE-TV, Channel 6, will offer a special program to teach viewers how to read.

Beginning March 2, it will air "Learn to Read" from 6 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. The show will run for 30 consecutive days.

"Learn to Read" was developed by WXYZ-TV in Detroit for literacy students. It offers reading lessons that follow much the same format as reading textbooks, starting with a review of the alphabet.

Anne De Vega, the station's promotions/community affairs assistant, says the program is a local project tied to the station's Project PLUS involvement.

Project PLUS is a national literacy awareness campaign sponsored by ABC and PBS stations nationwide. WATE is East Tennessee's ABC affiliate.

Area newspapers plan to distribute this report

The Knoxville News-Sentinel produced this special look at illiteracy and made it available to other newspapers in East Tennessee. The following newspapers plan to distribute the special report:

- The Independent Herald, Oneida
- Herald and Tribune, Jonesborough
- The Bledsonian-Banner, Pikeville
- The Dunlap Tribune, Dunlap
- Crossville Chronicle, Crossville
- Monroe County Advocate, Sweetwater
- The Newport Plain Talk, Newport
- The Herald-News, Dayton
- Cleveland Daily Banner, Cleveland
- The Claiborne Progress, Tazewell

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For information on literacy programs anywhere in Tennessee, call the Literacy Hotline:

1-800-531-1515

Literacy directory

Anderson County

■ Clinton — Anderson County Adult Literary, Anderson County Courthouse, South Main Street, Clinton, 37716, 457-5400. Contact Darlene Lollar; Pearl Rhea, Literacy Coordinator, Anderson County Board of Education, 457-5100, Ext. 245.

■ Lake City — Anderson County Adult Basic Education, Route 1, Box 528, Lake City, 37769, 457-5400. Contact: Carl Hicks, 426-2382.

■ Norris — Anderson County Literacy Council, Box 44, Norris, 37828, 494-0581. Contact: Barbara Ashdown.

■ Oak Ridge — Oak Ridge High School, Providence Road, Oak Ridge, 37830, 482-6355. Contact: Gayle Ward, Adult Basic Education director.

■ Tri-County Literacy Council, 137, Newell Lane, Oak Ridge, 37830, 483-8118. Contact: Judy Joy.

■ Oliver Springs — Anderson County Council Chapter of Tennessee Reading Association, 9001 Stately Circle, Knoxville, 37923, 693-2630. Contact: Nancy Beck, president.

Bledsoe County

■ Pikeville — Bledsoe County Adult Basic Education, Bledsoe County Schools, P.O. Box 369, Pikeville, 37367, 447-2914.

Blount County

■ Maryville — Adult Reading Program (Volunteer Literacy), Everett School Building, Everett High Road, Maryville, 982-8998. Contact: Carol Ergenbright.

■ Maryville and Blount County Adult Basic Education, Route 12, Box 501, Maryville, 37801, 982-8998. Contact: Cheryl Howe.

■ Louisville — Knoxville Adult Basic Education, Route 4, Box 212, Woodbine Rd., Louisville, 37777, 522 2822 or 970-2196. Contact: Emma Lou Elkins.

Bradley County

■ Cleveland — Remedial and Developmental Studies Program, Cleveland State Coummunity College, Cleveland, 37320, 472-7141.

■ Opportunity for Adult Reading, 155 Sixth St., S.E., P.O. Box 3297, Cleveland, 37311, 479-4111. Contact: Nancy Brewer.

■ Bradley County Schools, Cleveland, 37311. Contact: Douglas Little.

Cleveland State Coummunity College, Job Training Partnership Act, Cleveland, 37311, 472-7141, Ext. 370. Contact: Rosemary Dentyl.

■ GED preparation classes, Cleveland State Community College, Cleveland, 37320, 472-7141, Ext. 325.

■ Adult Basic Education, Bradley County Board of Education, Old Post Office, Broad Street, Cleveland, 37311, 472-4571.

Campbell County

■ Jellico — Mountain Womens Exchange, Box 204, Jellico, 37762, 784-8780. Contact: Anne Hablas.

■ LaFollette — Campbell County Adult Basic Education, 251 Summit Dr., LaFollette, 37766, 562-3773 or 562-5383. Contact: Charles Wells.

Claiborne County

■ New Tazewell — Claiborne County Adult Basic Education, Box 25, New Tazewell, 37825, 626-3511 or 626-3136. Contact: Norris Keck.

■ Claiborne County Volunteer Literacy Program. Contact: Roger Hansard, 626-5182.

Cocke County

■ Greeneville — Greene-Cocke Counties Literacy Program, Route 4, Box 538, Greeneville, 37743, 638-3008. Contact: Bonnie B. Jenkins.

■ Parrottsville — Cocke County Adult Basic Education, Route 1, Box 54, Parrottsville, 37843, 623-1336 or 623-3810. Contact: Dorothy Holder.

Cumberland County

■ Crossville — Cumberland County High School, Adult Basic Education, Crossville, 38555, 484-5194 or 373-4380. Contact: Edwin White.

■ Cumberland County Literacy Coordinator, Nikki Doyle, 484-6135.

Fentress County

■ Jamestown — Adult Basic Education, Drawer L, Jamestown, 38556, 879-9218. Contact: Alpha Black.

Grainger County

■ Rutledge — Grainger County Schools, Adult Basic Education, Rutledge, 37861, 828-4265. Contact: Dr. Charles Shoffner.

■ Grainger County Literacy Coordinator, Lillian Stephens, 497-2506 or 828-5228.

■ Washburn — Grainger County Literacy Program, Route 2, Washburn, 37888, 828-5436 or 497-2506.

Greene County

■ Greeneville — Greene-Cocke counties Literacy Program, Route 4, Box 538, Greeneville, 37743, 638-3008. Contact: Bonnie B. Jenkins.

■ Greeneville Adult Basic Education, Route 1, Box 202, Greeneville, 37743, 639-3475. Contact: Patricia Hughes.

■ Mowhak — Greene County Adult Basic Education, Box 131, Mohawk, 37810, 235-6695.

Hamblen County

■ Morristown — Morristown Adult Basic Education, Box 627, Morristown, 37814, 586-4931. Contact: Clara Bowlin.

■ Lakeway Reading Council, Route 9, Box 403, Morristown, 37814. Contact: Carolyn McCarter.

■ Hamblen County Literacy Coordinator, Bobbie Sellars, 581-5812.

Hancock County

■ Sneedville — Hancock County School System, Main Street, Sneedville, 37869, 733-2591 or 733-8580. Contact: Hyle Ferguson.

■ Hancock County Literacy Coordinator, Sherry Seal, 733-2591.

Hawkins County

■ Rogersville — Adult Basic Education, 643 Scott St., Rogersville, 37857, 272-7603 or 272-8367. Contact: Charles Fugate.

■ Hawkins County Literacy Coordinator, Joy Debord, 272-7629.

Jefferson County

■ Dandridge — Jefferson County Adult Basic Education, Route 3, Dandridge, 37725, 397-7384 or 397-3676. Contact: Richard Howerton.

■ Jefferson County Literacy Coordinator, Rosa Williams, 475-8912.

Knox County

■ Knox Area Literacy Council, P.O. Box 50792, Knoxville, 37950, 579-0860. Contact: Barbara Stephens.

■ Knox County Schools Adult Basic Education Program, P.O. Box [illegible]60, Knoxville, 37920, 579-0860. Contact: J.B. Bohn.

■ Knoxville City Schools Adult Basic Education Program, 212 [illegible]and, Knoxville, 37915, 544-3798. Contact: Emma Lou Elkins.

■ Knox County Literacy Coordinator, Jane Cody, 579-0860.

■ UT Adult Basic Skills Center, 402 Claxton Addition, Knoxville, 37996, 974-6161. Contact: Lana Shelton.

Loudon County

■ Lenoir City — Lenoir City Adult Basic Education, 104 A St., Lenoir City, 37771, 693-7798. Contact: [illegible] Mimms.

■ Henry Timberlake Council, Chapter TRA, 106 E. 2nd Ave., Lenoir City, 37771. Contact: Carrie Malone.

■ Loudon County Adult Basic Education, Eatons Elementary, Route 8, Lenoir City, 37771, 986-2170. Contact: Ruth Cardwell.

■ Loudon County Literacy Coordinator, Evelyn Rainwater, 986-5058.

McMinn County

■ Athens — McMinn County Adult Basic Education, McMinn County Courthouse, Athens, 37303, 745-1612. Contact: Cecil Smith.

■ McMinn County School Board, 943 Crestway Drive, Athens, 37303, 745-2863. Contact: Cecil Smith or Becky Dalton.

■ Etowah — Etowah City Schools, 858 8th St., Etowah, 37331, 263-5483. Contact: Steve Heath.

■ McMinn County Literacy Coordinator, Becky Dalton, 745-2863.

Monroe County

■ Madisonville — Adult Basic Education, Kennedy Office Building, Madisonville, 37354, 442-2373. Contact: Judy Beaty.

■ Sweetwater — Job Training Partnership Act, Basic Skills Classes, Sweetwater City Hall (basement), Sweetwater, 37874.

■ City Hall, Sweetwater, 37874, 337-7742. Contact: Mrs. Jackson Jones.

Morgan County

■ Oakdale — Morgan County Adult Basic Education, Oakdale School, Oakdale, 37829, 369-3885. Contact: Mary B. Langley.

Polk County

■ Polk County Literacy Coordinator, Margaret Swafford, 338-2811.

Roane County

■ Harriman — Harriman City Schools, Adult Basic Education Program, 1002 Roane St., Harriman, 37748, 882-9242. Contact: Lucille R. Buttram.

■ Roane Area Council, Chapter TRA, Route 7, Box 199, Harriman, 37748. Contact: Mildred Wade.

■ Kingston — Midway High School, Route 1, Box 302, Kingston, 37763, 376-5646.

Rhea County

■ Evensville — Rhea County Adult Basic Education Program, Route 2, Box 63, Evensville, 37332, 775-3603.

■ Spring City — Rhea County Literacy Program, Route 1, Box 266B, Spring City, 37381. Contact: Margaret Bott, 365-4678 or 775-0555.

Scott County

■ Oneida — Scott County Adult Basic Education, Route 3, Box 210, Oneida, 37541, 569-5611. Contact: Lyna Pennycuff.

■ Oneida City Adult Basic Education, Route 1, Box 144, Oneida, 37541. Contact: Bailey Cross.

Sequatchie County

■ Dunlap — Sequatchie County Schools, Box 488, Dunlap, 37327, 949-3617. Contact: Dr. Sandra [illegible], Adult Basic Education.

Sevier County

■ Sevierville — Sevier County Vocational School, Newport Highway, Sevierville, 37862, 453-1026 or 453-2155. Contact: Charles Elder.

Union County

■ Maynardville — Horace Maynard High School, Union County Adult Basic Education, Maynardville, 37807, 992-5232. Contact: Joseph Day.

■ Union County literacy coordinator, Debra Flatford, 992-5466.

Washington County

■ Johnson City — Johnson City Adult Reading Program, 501 Liberty Bell Blvd., Johnson City, 37601, 929-2151. Contact: Sue Sutherland.

■ Johnson City Literary Council, 1206 Greenfiled Drive, Johnson City, 37601, 282-8787. Contact: Dorothy Bowling.

■ Johnson City Area Literacy Council, 1506 Crystal Springs Road, Johnson City, 37601, 928-0221. Contact: Earle Hausie.

■ Washington County Literacy Coordinator, Carolyn Sluder, Science Hill Vocational School, 929-2151.

■ Jonesborough — Washington County School System, 105 W. College St., Jonesborough, 37659, 753-2131 or 257-3601. Contact: A.B. Foster.

■ David Crockett High School, Route 14, Jonesborough, 37659, 753-6671 or 257-6155. Contact: David Britton or Art Cantrell.

Libraries with special literacy programs

■ Knox County Public Library System: Patricia Watson, director, 500 W. Church Ave., Knoxville, 37902-2505.

■ Clinch-Powell Regional Library: Jeanette McMaster, acting director, 704 N. Main St., P.O. Box 269, Clinton, 37716.

■ Fort Loudoun Regional Library: Marie Middleton, director, 718 George St., N.W., Athens, 37303.

■ Nolichucky Regional Library: Anne Kraus, director, 315 McCrary Drive, Morristown, 37814.

■ Upper Cumberland Regional Library: Julia Boyd, director, 208 E. Minnear St., Cookeville, 38501.

■ Watauga Regional Library: Joy A. Mowery, director, P.O. Box 1250 Carroll Reece Station, Johnson City, 37602.

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Wausau Sunday Herald Sunday, November 29, 1987

Illiteracy: The well-kept secret

Imagine what it must be like for adults who can't read or write:

- They can't fill out job applications.
- They can't leave notes for their spouses or children.
- They must get someone to read personal letters to them.
- They can't order from the restaurant menu.
- They can't curl up in bed with a favorite book.
- They have to have someone interpret the loan paperwork they're signing.
- They can't help their children with homework.
- They can't read street signs.

By Bill Hetland
Wausau Daily Herald

He had kept the secret from his wife for years.

He was too ashamed and embarrassed to share it with her.

Lois Gilliland

He did confide in a close friend.

But no other person knew what he had dreaded to reveal:

He could not read and write.

His wife had never suspected anything. After all, when she gave him the grocery list he'd go to the supermarket and come back with the items she had jotted down.

What she didn't know was that her husband took that grocery list to his best friend, who told him what to buy at the store.

He no longer has to hide that secret.

Because there is no secret to hide.

He now can read and write, thanks to his participation in the Adult Literacy Program at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau.

He is no longer functionally illiterate.

In existence for 13 years, the program has helped improve the lives of hundreds of Central Wisconsin residents.

And hundreds more can be helped — if they want it.

Lois Gilliland, developmental services supervisor at NTC, said some individuals are reluctant to seek help because pride gets in the way.

Gilliland said some studies show that as much as 25 percent of the population has some degree of illiteracy.

Gilliland said for too long the problem wasn't being addressed. But strides have been made over the last two years through Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), the nationwide campaign that encourages volunteer efforts to combat illiteracy.

And, she said, business and industry finally realize that employees with literacy problems become more valuable employees if they get training.

Those workers and other functionally illiterate adults can get the help they need through the Adult Literacy Program at the college.

"People are very self-conscious about not being able to read. They don't want anyone to think they're dumb. But they're not dumb," she said.

They may have not had enough schooling, or they may have had learning disabilities, or they may have given up trying to learn to read or write at an early age because classmates made fun of them.

As unlikely as it may seem in Wisconsin, where the educational and employment levels are high, illiteracy is a problem.

At the recent state Conference on Adult Literacy held in Oshkosh, participants examined what was defined as "a significant problem with significant consequences in Wisconsin." The cost of illiteracy, both to the individual and to the community and society, was termed high.

The link between the lack of basic literacy skills and a wide range of emotional and social problems was termed signficiant.

Gilliland has found that functionally illiterate adults are quite often fast learners.

"They may move along quite rapidy because of their adult experiences," she said.

Gilliland said there are three levels of illiteracy: Level One applies to persons with a reading and writing equivalency from grades 0-4; Level Two from grades 5-8; and Level Three from grades 9-12.

The majority of the students in the literacy program fall in Level Two, she said.

"We have more difficulty reaching the Level One students. They've learned to cope quite well and don't want others to know they can't read," she said.

Television is one of the tools a functionally illiterate person can use to cope, she said.

"The emphasis on TV hasn't made it as necessary to read to find out information."

All of the individuals who participate in the Adult Literacy Program are not completely illiterate. Some might need help with math or just want to improve their writing skills, she said.

The college takes a personal approach with each individual who wants to participate, Gilliland said.

After an NTC staff member makes an assessment of an individual's reading and writing skills, instructors and volunteer tutors work one-on-one with participants.

It's a flexible program, one that allows students to set up their own schedule to fit around their work hours.

There's also some computer-assisted instruction that works well for individuals interested in computer technology, Gilliland said.

"If there's repetition, the computer doesn't get tired of listening. The answers come right away — when a teacher or tutor might be busy with someone else."

There's a great amount of satisfaction in teaching a functionally illiterate adult how to read and write, she said.

"It's a real boost to the instructional staff — the feeling that they're helping someone."

Just a few of the many success stories include:

■ One man who had turned down offers to become a foreman because he couldn't fill out the forms. He eventually lost his job. The literacy program put him back on the right track.

■ A woman who had 13 children found herself with no marketable skills after her husband died. She had never worked outside the home. Her participation in the literacy program and her subsequent attainment of a GED (high school equivalency diploma) resulted in her becoming a nursing assistant.

■ A 75-year-old woman was able to improve her writing skills so she could write better letters to her friends and relatives.

Tutoring sessions are offered at the college, D.C. Everest High School in Schofield and North Central Health Care Facility in Wausau.

Gilliland hopes a downtown center will be built in Wausau with funds from the Altrusa Club, Lions Club and the Gannett Foundation.

"Some people who are illiterate don't feel comfortable coming to an educational institution. Coming to a downtown location might be less threatening."

After the recent showing of a made-for-TV movie that starred Dennis Weaver as a functionally illiterate foreman who lost his job, the college received numerous calls from both prospective volunteers and people who want to read and write, Gilliland said.

She hopes the message gets out to adults with reading and writing problems that help is available, that their problem isn't unique.

"Nobody really needs to feel alone," she said.

Literacy aids aren't 'Dick and Jane' books

Workbooks used with some of the participants in the Adult Literacy Program at Wausau's Northcentral Technical College aren't the "Dick and Jane" books used in the beginning grades.

Lois Gilliland, developmental services supervisor at the college, said the workbooks provide material that's of interest to adults, "like how to buy a car or get a loan."

In a Level Two workbook for adults who can read at an equivalency level of grades 5-8, one chapter is titled "Television and Children." The introductory text reads:

"Some people say TV is bad for children. They say if children watch a lot of TV, they stay indoors too much. Also children may not do their homework. They may not play with their friends. And children may watch programs that are not good for them.

"How can parents help their children? One way is to help their children choose a few good programs. Also, they can watch TV with their children. After the show, parents and their children can talk about it. Watching television is something families can share."

A series of exercises follows. OnO asks the student to finish sentences by writing in the missing word. For example, "Some children spend too much t— watching TV."

Another workbook shows students how to write notes, lists, letters, post cards, and addresses on envelopes and packages.

NTC offers tutor training sessions

Special training sessions are being held at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau for anyone interested in helping adults read.

"We try to get volunteers to make a commitment of once a week — 1, 2 or 3 hours," said Lois Gilliland, developmental services supervisor at the college.

It's important for tutors to live up to their commitment because many students have such a low level of self-esteem that they feel hurt if the tutors fail to show up for instructional sessions, she said.

Topics covered include techniques for working with adults, tutoring resources, responsibilities of the tutor and characteristics of the illiterate adult.

Instructors include specialists in literacy volunteer training.

Persons can sign up or obtain more information about the training sessions by calling Gilliland at the college at 675-3331, extension 413.

About 50 volunteer tutors have participated over the last two years, Gilliland said. They represent a variety of backgrounds.

"Some are teachers or former teachers, some are just interested in helping people, some are heavy into volunteer work. We have people who volunteer in the evenings."

WAUSAU SUNDAY HERALD
Sunday, November 29, 1987

'Once upon a time...'

Reading Aloud program fosters love for books

By Bill Hetland
Wausau Daily Herald

The kids laughed. Hearty laughs. They covered their smiling faces as they watched the image in front of them.

A good story line with fast pacing. Some music. Some humor. Great fun. Great entertainment.

What they were watching wasn't the television set. No cartoons. No "Pee Wee's Playhouse." No "Lone Ranger" reruns. No "Smurfs". No commercials for sugary cereal.

In front of them was an adult who was reading from a book and playing a harmonica. A real, live, in-the-flesh adult. No instant replays. Just reality.

The adult was the Rev. John Roseth, pastor of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Wausau and the husband of Lincoln School kindergarten teacher Darlene Roseth.

He was one of 20 adults invited by librarian Lois Steffenhagen to participate in the recent Read Aloud program for grade school students at Lincoln School. Similar programs have been held in schools throughout the United States.

Roseth — he likes to be called Pastor John — was a willing participant.

"We have three boys. They're all products of being read aloud to. The kids at church also love being read to. It's real comforting — a special close time."

Having a minister read to the students was especially appropriate because, as Roseth notes, "The origin of Sunday school was to teach children to read."

For his appearance before the kindergarten students at Lincoln, Pastor John read from the book "Lentil," the story of a boy who wants to be a singer but doesn't have a very good voice. So he takes up the harmonica and becomes a real star.

As Pastor John was reading, he pulled out his harmonica and showed that he, like the boy in "Lentil," can play a mean tune.

The youngsters were delighted with Pastor John's presentation.

So was Steffenhagen. She was also pleased that a variety of adults — including, among others, a beautician, a secretary, a firefighter and a school bus driver — were each willing to read to one class of the 340-student school.

Like other educators throughout the country, Steffenhagen sees reading aloud to children as a way to combat illiteracy and increase a child's desire to learn to read well. She sees it as a way to foster a love for books and reading.

"My feeling is that too many parents quit reading to children after the child learns to read," Steffenhagen says.

She contends that parents shouldn't think that reading aloud is doing the work for the children. Rather, it helps them learn what reading is all about and enhances their overall development.

While she recognizes there can be good programming on television, Steffenhagen says TV shouldn't be the sole source of entertainment.

Reading, she says, is a great way for families to share time together. "It's a form of communication between the adult and the child."

Mary Jett-Simpson, president of the Wisconsin State Reading Association, says a consistent research finding is that families who read aloud to their children during preschool and primary years are contributing significantly to their children's potentional for success in school.

"Reading aloud daily tells children their families love and care about them and provides children opportunities to learn about their immediate and expanding world. Truly, families are partners in educating their children," Jett-Simpson says.

Steffenhagen says the adult participants in the Read Aloud program at Lincoln School were asked to read a favorite children's story.

"Most chose something they were comfortable with," she says.

Shirley Schoeder, a secretary at Lincoln, read "Sometimes It's Turkey, Sometime's It's Feathers," for a special education class.

It's about a little old lady who finds a turkey egg in the spring. She feeds and cares for the egg with the intention of having it for Thanksgiving dinner after it becomes a full-grown turkey.

She becomes so attached to the turkey that she does have it for Thanksgiving — but as a guest at the dinner table.

The children were quite attentive during all presentations, says Steffenhagen, who admits she was a bit worried over how they'd react to the adult visitors

"But I was very, very pleased with their behavior," she says.

"The program has already been beneficial for the children and I am hopeful it will encourage more reading aloud in homes and classrooms."

WAUSAU SUNDAY HERALD
Sunday, December 27, 1987

'Little Prince' reflects childlike enthusiasm

By Bill Hetland
Wausau Daily Herald

The people who turn me on are those who have maintained a childlike enthusiasm for life.

They could be 8, or 18, or 38, or 88. Age doesn't make much of a difference.

They're the kind of people who get excited — really excited — over the first warm day of spring, or the smell of lilacs in bloom, or the sight of a sunset from a mountaintop.

They're the kind of people who are thrilled when they see friends or relatives after a separation of several years.

They're the kind of people who swing and sway to the bands performing in the concert halls.

They enjoy life. They show they enjoy life, that they appreciate others.

Because one of my favorite children's books, "The Little Prince," touches on maintaining a childlike enthusiasm for life, I thought it was an appropriate book to read to the fourth grade students at Lincoln School.

After being asked to participate in the Read Aloud program by librarian Lois Steffenhagen, I told her I wanted to share my enthusiasm for the book with the boys and girls.

Written and illustrated in the 1940s by French author Antoine De Saint-Exupery, the book was given to me a few years ago by an adult friend, an individual in his 40s who has always been childlike in his enthusiasm for life. Childlike. Not childish.

Saint-Exupery, in dedicating the book to a friend, writes, "All grown-ups were once children — although few of them remember it."

Please turn to **CHILDLIKE**/2E

I read the first chapter to the Lincoln School students. It tells of a little boy's frustration over adults who don't understand his drawings of a boa constrictor in the act of swallowing an animal.

Whenever he showed his drawings to the adults, they'd mistake them for a hat and advise him to give up any thought of painting as a career and devote himself to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar.

Implying that the adults lack imagination, the boy says, "Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them."

So, instead of becoming a painter he learned to pilot airplanes.

Whenever he met an adult who seemed at all clear-sighted, he'd show him his drawings.

"I would try to find out, so, if this was a person of true understanding. But, whoever it was, he, or she, would always say:

" 'That is a hat.'

"Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge, and golf, and politics and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man."

After reading the chapter, I told the Lincoln School students that just because we have to be serious from time to time doesn't mean that we can't be childlike in our enthusiasm for life. We shouldn't be afraid to let others know how happy we are.

I was surprised that fourth-graders could make such a clear distinction between "childish" and "childlike." But they did.

When I asked if anyone knew the difference, one boy said childish is like when his sister throws a temper-tantrum, but that childlike is when his mother is real happy and excited over the new coat she gets. Other children came up with similar answers.

It was fun reading a chapter from "The Little Prince" to boys and girls who obviously have a childlike enthusiasm for life. I hope they have it when they become adults.

Bill Hetland is features and special projects editor of the Wausau Daily Herald.

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You can inspire children by reading to them

Why read aloud to children?

Author Jim Trelease answers that question in his best best-selling "The Read-Aloud Handbook."

"Answered simply, the initial reasons are the same reasons you talk to a child: to reassure, to entertain, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire — and to do it all personally, not impersonally with a machine.

"All those experiences create or strengthen a postive attitude about reading, and attitude is the foundation stone upon which you build appetites. A secondary reason, and of great importance in an age of rising illiteracy, is the established fact that regular reading aloud strengthens children's reading, writing, and speaking skills — and thus the entire civilizing process."

Trelease is a frequent lecturer to parents, teachers and professional groups on children, literature and television.

His handbook includes a guide to more than 300 books, from picture books for infants though novels and anthologies for eighth graders.

A University of Massachusetts graduate, he was for 20 years an artist and writer for the Springfield (Mass.) Daily News. His work also has appeared in the Sunday book review sections of the Washington Post and the New York Times.

Trelease said after speaking about reading books at nearly 30 schools a year for more than a dozen years, certain patterns appeared that spurred him to write "The Read-Aloud Handbook."

Among those patterns:

- "Since the late 1960s there had been a dramatic decline in the number of books read by the children whose classrooms I'd visited."
- "The decline was so sharp that by 1979 when I asked, 'What have you read lately?' the children were naming their classroom textbooks. That happened not once but numerous times."
- "While the decline was general, it was not all-inclusive. Some classes overwhelmed me with their responses; they loved books and read voraciously. In each case that contagious enthusiasm was a direct result of a teacher's attitude. He or she loved books and shared that affection by reading aloud and talking to the class about books."

Trelease said he decided to complete his own read-aloud book list when he realized there was no available list other than brief ones included in children's literature textbooks.

He was amazed that a modest self-publishing venture which cost him $650 inititally would result in the sale of more than 20,000 copies of his booklet in 30 states and Canada within three years.

Then, in 1982, Penguin Books asked him to expand the booklet into a book. A letter from a fan of his book to syndicated columnist "Dear Abby" resulted in orders of 120,000 copies.

He said the success of his book is evidence in support of a proposition.

"I propose that you — one parent, one grandparent, or one teacher — can make a lasting difference if you are willing to stand up for what you believe and value."

He suggests a three-pronged approach:

1. You read to children while they are still young enough to want to imitate what they are seeing and hearing.
2. You make sure the readings are interesting and exciting enough to hold their interest while you are building up their imagination.
3. You keep the initial readings short enough to fit their attention span and gradually lengthen both.

He encourages parents to make an extra effort to read to children. It's not an easy task, he says, because of the competition from television. He cites statistics that show the average television set is on seven hours a day (up from five hours in 1960) and that the nation's 3-year-olds are now watching as much TV as the 10-year-olds — an average of 30 hours a week.

Competing with that kind of monopoly can be done, he says.

"You, all by yourself, can instill a desire for books and reading in an entire family or class. If a plastic box in your living room can turn on your child to chocolate breakfast cereal, then you should be able to do ten times as much — because you are a sensitve, loving and caring human being. (They have yet to invent the television set that can hug a child.)"

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Adults read favorite stories to students

Twenty adults representing a variety of backgrounds shared their favorite children's stories with Lincoln School students during the recent Read Aloud program.

Jim Hawkins, Lincoln parent and actor, read "How the Camel Got His Hump" and "How the Rinoceros Got His Skin" from Rudyard Kipling's "Just So Stories" for the first grade.

Laurie Rogge, Lincoln parent and a beautician, read "Curious George Walks His Pets" to Deanna Kostroski's special education class.

Pang Xiong, an English-as-a-second-language aide, read "The Monkeys and the Grasshoppers" for the third grade. She read in the Hmong language.

Dr. Ted Nicholson, superintendent of the Wausau School District, read a Dr. Seuss favorite, "The Cat in the Hat," for the first grade.

Joyce Kieffer, administrative assistant to the mayor of Wausau, read "Gus Gets the Message" for the second grade.

Bill Hetland, features and special projects editor of the Wausau Daily Herald, read "The Little Prince" for the fourth grade.

Suzanne Sill, the weather person at Channel 7 TV, read "The Six Napoleons" from "Sherlock Holmes for the fifth and sixth grades.

Sue Missett, Lincoln parent, read "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" for the second grade.

Willie Beckman, a football player at Wausau West High School, read "Bench Captain" from "Boy's Life Book of Football Stories" for the sixth grade.

Amy Hilliard, news anchor at Channel 7 TV, read "Sleeping Ugly" for the kindergarten class.

Alberta Cunningham, Lincoln counselor, and Tony Nelson, psychologist, read "Rosie and Michael" for the second grade.

David Damgaard, Wausau's director of pupil services, read "Lucky and the Giant" for Wendy Drew's special education class.

Arlon Parkin, Lincoln principal, read "Chain of Circumstance," a drama in real life from the December 1987 Reader's Digest for the fourth grade.

Grace Wiederhoeft, library aide, read "Chester Chipmunk's Thanksgiving" for Linda Evans' special education class.

Anne Stubbe, poet and former school crossing guard, read selections of her poetry for the fifth grade.

Ernest Rosenow, Lincoln parent and Wausau fireman, read "The Climbing Craft" from Childcraft magazine for the second grade.

Kathy Schoepke, school bus driver, read "Frosty the Snowman" for the first grade.

The Rev. John Roseth, minister at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church and the husband of kindergarten teacher Darlene Roseth, read "Lentil" and played his harmonica for the kindergarten class.

Shirely Schoeder, Lincoln secretary, read "Sometimes It's Turkey, Sometimes It's Feathers" for Sue Jaeck's special education class.

Dr. Dan Fifield, Lincoln parent and physician, read "Horton Here's a Who" by Dr. Seuss.

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CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Sunday, December 27, 1987

Off disability and on computers

Learning English is the key to successful career

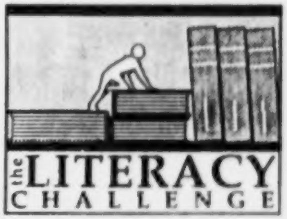
By Clay Kallam
Staff writer

Staff photo/Jon McNally

MARIA HERRERA: "I can help my people. Sometimes they want to know something but they don't speak English."

MARIA HERRERA LEFT Mexico City with her family in 1980 to care for her father. She came to Pittsburg — green card in hand — with no knowledge of the English language, spoken or written.

Two days before Christmas in 1981, she slipped at work and fell heavily, suffering a severe back injury. She spent a month in the hospital, but even when she was released she was in constant pain. The left side of her body was so weak she couldn't lift anything with her left arm and she had trouble walking.



For two years, her life was on a downward spiral. She was unable to work and she had to take care of two children on meager disability checks. It looked like Herrera was caught in a trap she could not escape.

But fate — and her own drive and will to succeed — intervened, and today Maria Herrera is a modern American success story. Her enrollment in the Pittsburg Adult School helped her become literate in English, and from there she moved on to mastering the mysteries of computers.

Now she works in a law office, helping other Hispanics deal with the complexities of American society.

At the start: referral

"The case was referred to me about three years ago," said Joseph De Assis, a vocational counselor in Oakland. "Nothing could be done for her because of the injury and English situation."

De Assis is hired by insurance companies to help get disabled workers back on the job, and because of his fluency in Spanish he often deals with people like Maria Herrera.

But De Assis' early pessimism wasn't justified. A new physical therapy program eased her pain and helped her regain her strength, and she began to study English.

"She was intelligent and she really wanted to learn," said Stella Orona, who taught Herrera at the Pittsburg Adult School. "The thing about Maria is she really wants to succeed."

When she first arrived in America, that drive to succeed helped her find work in a convalescent hospital despite her inability to speak English.

"When I started to work, it was hard for me," the 37-year-old Herrera said. "My supervisor showed me how to use machines by sign language."

But during her stay in the hospital, she realized she needed to learn English.

"My brothers speak English very well," the Pittsburg resident said, and they urged her to learn the language. Her children, Israel and Arisbel, who go to Pittsburg public schools, also encouraged her. "They teach me too," she says.

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Where to call:

These agencies and schools conduct adult literacy programs:

WEST COUNTY

Project LEAP 620-6565
Project Second Chance 646-6358
Contra Costa College 235-7800 Ext. 3210
Richmond Adult School 234-1766

CENTRAL COUNTY

Diablo Valley Literacy Council 682-8410
Project Second Chance 646-6358
Diablo Valley College 685-1230 Ext. 320
San Ramon Valley Adult School 837-7445
Mt. Diablo Adult School 685-7340
Acalanes Adult School 935-0170
Martinez Adult School 228-3276

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Livermore READ Project 447-2376
Alameda County Literacy Project 670-6270
Chabot College 373-5800
Pleasanton Adult School 426-4280
Livermore Adult School 447-6671

EAST COUNTY

Project Second Chance 754-8317
Los Medanos College 439-2181 Ext. 3253
Liberty Adult School 634-2565
Antioch Adult School 757-6211
Pittsburg Adult School 439-2031

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Herrera also had the help of a tutor hired by the insurance company. "Mr. De Assis helped me very much," she said. "He found the computer school and a teacher who would go to my home."

Herrera also took English classes through the Regional Occupational Program through the Pittsburg Adult School, and then started in on computers.

Leaving lasting impressions

It didn't take long for her to make an impression on her teachers.

"She persevered even though she came in with a few strikes against her," said Donna Guidos, her computer teacher. "She went past anything I expected from her."

It wasn't long before Herrera was helping other Spanish-speakers in the computer class, and soon she started taking classes at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg.

"It's fun," said Herrera of her work with computers. "Something is new every day."

Herrera's progress impressed De Assis, who encouraged his wife, attorney Simona Rosales, to hire her. Rosales was reluctant at first, as was Herrera.

"I said I'm not skilled," Herrera said, but De Assis persuaded them both — and everyone has benefited.

Finding perfect matches

Getting student with right tutor isn't always easy

By Clay Kallam
Staff Writer

THERE ARE THOSE who talk about the problem of illiteracy and there are those who do something about it.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of a variety of adult literacy programs throughout the East Bay, and hundreds of students owe their new-found skills to otherwise ordinary people who donate their time to help someone in need.

Typically, volunteers work on a one-to-one basis with adult learners in weekly or twice-weekly sessions, patiently going over the fundamental skills of literacy.

"You see such great strides," said volunteer tutor Cathy James of Pleasanton. It's "a very rewarding experience — the response is immediate."

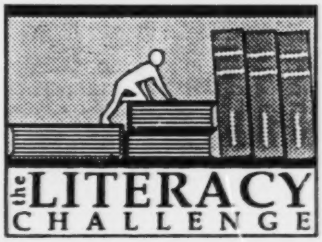
One reason for that success is the attitude of the students. "If they've come forward, they're motivated," said Carole Talan of Project Second Chance, which has trained more than 800 volunteers from its Pleasant Hill office. In three years, the project has significantly upgraded the skills of more than 500 adult learners.

But in these one-to-one sessions, it takes more than just motivation to make it work.

"If it wasn't for the teacher, I wouldn't do anything," said Haskell Patrick, who is learning to read through Project Second Chance. "The teachers are the ones who make the students."

Literacy program administrators are well aware of the importance of the student-teacher relationship.

"It's the most important thing," said Irene Yarrow of the Alameda County Library Adult Literacy Project. "Even a student who's very motivated, if the tutor isn't right, will drop out."



Gray Wiley, the student tutor coordinator for Project Second Chance, knows the importance of the volunteer tutor. "They are absolutely vital," she said flatly.

Volunteer tutors are trained, usually in three one-day sessions, and then matched up with students. Despite the acknowledged importance of putting the right student with the right teacher, most programs lack the staff to do much more than guess.

"We don't have the ability to match except in an instinctual way," said Yarrow.

"Sometimes you know from the beginning you've made a perfect match," said Wiley. "Sometimes it doesn't work."

"You have to be able to accept the student where he is," said Jack Kelleher of Antioch, whose first two students dropped out after just a short time. "They had problems at home that created difficulties."

Lisa Vance of San Rafael, who works with Project LEAP in Richmond, agreed with Kelleher's assessment. "A lot of learners are nervous," she said. "There's such a fear of failing."

Vance has been working with Martha Quinones of Richmond, and it took a while to get things running smoothly.

"She was giving me too much homework," said Quinones. "I said 'Lisa, you're going to have to calm down on the homework.' "

"Tutors are nervous too," said Vance, who ran into some unexpected obstacles. "It didn't occur to me that Martha would have trouble with telling the difference between capitals and normal (lower case) letters," said Vance, and that slowed their progress for a while.

Vance also had to make adjustments. "She'd say 'I have a headache' and I'd say 'Let's do it on the phone.' "

Now the two work well together. "Lisa always has something new for me," said Quinones. "I see other tutors and I don't think I could get along with just anybody."

"Martha takes a lot of initiative in what she wants to know," said Vance. "Our lessons don't go according to the typical plans.

"I enjoy it because there is a relationship," she said. "You can really know what your student is learning."

Sometimes, though, things don't work out. Lonnie Reid of San Ramon was paired with a high school student from Livermore in what turned out to be a frustrating situation.

"She wouldn't do her workbook," said Reid. "I couldn't teach her what I had been taught to teach."

Reid has not been contacted since, though she's willing to tutor again. Administrators admit follow-up is not a high priority due to staffing limitations.

"We're putting more of an emphasis on follow-up," said Alameda County's Yarrow. "We cut back on our outreach (programs) be-

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cause we didn't have the staff (to handle them). We have a waiting list" of both students who want to learn and tutors who want to teach.

Project Second Chance, which focuses on Central and East County, also has a waiting list. "Where we really have the problem is East County," Wiley said, "There is a lot of need but not too many tutors."

In Benicia, Susan Lynn is just starting a program through the library system. Twenty-six people have registered for the first tutor training program, which will conclude Dec. 1, and 25 already have signed up for a March session.

Not everyone will be a good tutor, as the administrators have learned. Yarrow lists four requirements for a good tutor:

- Teach in a non-critical way.
- Be flexible and creative.
- Focus on the student's needs rather than their own needs.
- Realize the students need someone to convince them they can learn.

For those who do step forward, there are rewards.

Evelyn Hivy of the Diablo Valley Literacy Council is motivated by "really seeing somebody be able to use something in their own life."

Jack Kelleher agreed."It's nice seeing people wanting to do something for themselves, and more important, accomplishing something."

Central County

Volunteer tutors or adult learners interested in teaching or learning on a one-to-one basis should call either of the following numbers:

Diablo Valley Literacy Council 682-8410
Project Second Chance 646-6358

Adult learners interested in taking a class should call any of the following numbers:

Diablo Valley College 685-1230 x320
San Ramon Valley Adult School 837-7445
Mt. Diablo Adult School 685-7340
Acalanes Adult School 935-0170
Martinez Adult School 228-3276

East County

Volunteer tutors or adult learners interested in teaching or learning on a one-to-one basis should call either of the following number:

Project Second Chance 754-8317

Adult learners interested in taking a class should call any of the following numbers:

Los Medanos College 439-2181 ext 3253
Liberty Adult School 634-2565
Antioch Adult School 757-6211
Pittsburg Adult School 439-2031

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Sunday, November 29, 1987

Reading specialist builds step by step

The Literacy Challenge is being reported by Clay Kallam. Stories on illiteracy have appeared in the Times on Sunday, Monday and today. Other articles will appear periodically in the future.

By Clay Kallam
Staff writer

It seems so natural.

The shapes on the printed page are letters. The groups of shapes are words. You pick up the paper and, with no apparent effort, read.

But the fundamentals that turn those lines and circles into letters, and the letters into words, were learned. We've forgotten the careful steps that led us from consonants to blends, from pictures to words, from illiterate to literate.

But Janet Laughran-Smith remembers.

She's a reading specialist and mentor teacher at Springhill School in Lafayette, working with youngsters every day on the building blocks of literacy.

It begins with phonics.

"We teach the sounds of the consonants and short vowels in kindergarten," says Laughran-Smith, and the link between a letter and the sound it makes is reinforced over the next few years of school.

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Though phonics is a vital part of learning to read, it's not the only method.

"Look-say" approach teaches children to recognize certain words on sight, without having to go through the process of sounding them out.

"Look-say" was in vogue several years ago, but educators have emphasized it less and less in the 1980s. Still, it has its place in learning to read, as Laughran-Smith and other teachers realize.

" 'The' is a memory word. You just have to memorize it," she says.

Sounding out a word like "the"

Where to volunteer or get help

CENTRAL COUNTY

Volunteer tutors or adult learners interested in working on a one-to-one basis should call either of the following two numbers:

Diablo Valley Literacy Council 682-8410
Project Second Chance 646-6358

Adult learners interested in taking a class should call any of the following numbers:

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EAST COUNTY

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Antioch Adult School 757-6211
Pittsburg Adult School 439-2031

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requires phonics skills that are not acquired in the early grades, yet little or no actual reading could take place without the ability to recognize the word.

Still, Laughran-Smith is wary of too many memory words.

"'Look-say' is a disaster if it's the only (method being used)," she says. "It's a combination of both (phonics and "look-say") that works best."

First-graders continue the emphasis on phonics, working on blending consonants (for example, pronouncing "bl" or "cr" requires a combination of two separate sounds) and long vowels.

"By second grade, they've pretty much figured out the code," says Laughran-Smith, "but there are tremendous variations in ability.

"We have children who enter kindergarten already able to read, though that doesn't mean they're going to stay ahead."

In third grade and beyond, the actual mechanics of reading take a back seat to comprehension.

"The skills become more language-involved," says Laughran-Smith. "By the end of the third grade we don't test for phonics anymore."

Though the same material must be taught to an adult who's learning to read, the process is much different.

"It's difficult to talk of grade levels," says Carole Talan, head of Project Second Chance in Pleasant Hill, "because it's such a mixed bag. Some skills are high, others low."

Project Second Chance, which teaches adults to read by using volunteer tutors on a one-to-one basis, employs the Laubach method.

In this system, tutors are given manuals that map out step-by-step procedures.

"One of the good things about the manuals is they give you the skills and you don't have to learn them," says Evelyn Hity, who works with the Diablo Valley Literacy Council in Concord.

The Laubach method relies heavily on phonics and is very systematic.

"All of the material is based on what you've taught them already," says Hity, who's been tutoring for about 15 years. "It's very sequential."

Despite the aid of the manuals, volunteer tutors need some instruction. A 15-hour workshop, taught by Hity, extends over three Saturdays. After the training is complete, tutors are assigned to students, and the process of learning to read begins.

When the four Laubach workbooks are completed, an adult reader is at about the sixth-grade level, and should be ready to enter community college or adult-education programs. There's no average rate of progress, but a native English speaker probably will complete all four books after two to three years of weekly sessions. A non-English speaker will usually take about a year longer.

"It's not always real steady progress," says Talan. "Bad habits are harder to break."

The Literacy Volunteers of America are another well-established group that works with volunteer tutors and adult learners, but they take a different tack than Laubach.

"We don't have specific materials the tutors teach out of," said Susan Bury, a staff member in LVA's Berkeley office, which services El Cerrito and parts of West County. "It's more using whatever the student feels he or she needs to read.

"Most of our training evolves around what we call a 'language experience story,'" she said. "It's just a conversation about something important to the student. The teacher writes down one or two paragraphs and that's what they use for the lesson."

LVA tutors use both phonics and "look-say", and have a little more emphasis on memory words because the vocabulary in the conversation might involve words like "television" that are tough to decode with basic phonics.

"Phonics is a good beginning skill, but it's a very slow process," says Bury. "We teach survival words like 'poison' or 'danger.' We don't feel you can use just one technique."

But neither group claims to have the one true path to teaching adults.

"What the student wants is more important," says Talan. "If the student wants to read the Bible, then that's success."

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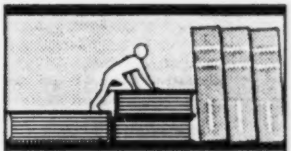
Why too much TV is bad



the LITERACY CHALLENGE

"The primary danger of the television screen lies not so much in the behavior it produces — although there is danger there — but in the behavior it prevents."

Urie Bronfenbrenner,
Educational psychologist

By Clay Kallam

Staff writer

A child's job is to play.

During play, experts believe a child acquires social and behavioral skills that are the roots of later learning — but a child locked into the Saturday morning cartoon marathon is developing roots that will only nurture a couch potato.

"Children have to exercise the muscles of their imagination," says Pat Monighan-Nourot, an expert in children's play and language development. "They don't do that when they watch TV."

And imagination has a lot to do with the basics of reading. A child who can pretend a coffee cup is a spaceship or a castle is learning to use one thing as a symbol for another — just as letters are symbols for sounds.

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"Young kids learn to make symbolic transformations," says Monighan-Nourot, a Benicia resident who teaches at Sonoma State. "If they can understand (that idea), they can understand that a capital 'a,' a handwritten 'a,' and a little 'a,' all represent the same concept."

Such skills are honed during imaginative play — something that watching television definitely is not.

"The continuous trancelike fixation of the TV viewer is not attention but distraction," report Australian researchers Merrelyn and Fred Emery in a "Choice Of Futures," "a form akin to daydreaming."

And there's a lot of that daydreaming going on every day. By the time an average American child has finished high school, according to Britannica Learning Centers he or she has spent about 11,000 hours in school — and about 15,000 hours in front of a TV.

What's worse, the most concentrated viewing comes from the very young. "Preschool children are the single largest television audience in America," writes Marie Winn in her book "The Plug-In Drug." That age group lacks the critical and analytic tools necessary to separate advertising from programming, or fact from fiction.

"Some experts say that children below the age of 6 or 7 shouldn't watch TV at all," says Monighan-Nourot — the time would be better spent acquiring the imaginative and symbolic skills that are the fundamentals of reading.

"There is no doubt that children read fewer books when television is av[illegible]," writes Winn, and there is a [illegible]on between heavy television watching and low reading achievement. Another important factor in children's ability to read well is their home environment — if children are read to, and see their parents read, then they are much more likely to read on their own. However, if the whole family does nothing but watch television, reading skills are less likely to thrive.

PBS doesn't pass

Even the highly-touted "Sesame Street" is not regarded as a substitute for reading or being read to.

"Sesame Street, according to several studies, does not enhance, in and of itself, cognitive skills,' writes Winn. Monighan-Nourot agrees. "'Sesame Street' is not so hot for children with a more analytical style," she says.

Television can be an aid to learning, though, but the most important factor is the presence of an adult.

"If adults are there to mediate the situation (ask questions and encourage discussion), it has the most value," she says.

But all too often, experts say television is used as a baby sitter — while parents are taking advantage of the time to fix dinner or read the paper or pay bills.

"I think most everybody does," said Antioch's Joyce Wisecarver, who has three children, but more and more parents are getting away from letting television chew up their children's lives.

"Some of the talk shows in the afternoon talk about things the little ones probably shouldn't hear," said Wisecarver, but that's not the only problem. "Many times, we've had to turn off the TV so the kids can do their homework."

Resisting temptation

Some children seem more immune to television's charm. Claudette Garner's daughter, 4-year-old Courtney, is one.

"She's not the kind of child who watches a lot of TV," said Garner. "She watches it when I watch it."

Debbie Wood's 6-year-old son Steven has the same tendency. "He doesn't run to the TV set," said Wood. "TV is not what he goes to."

When they do watch, it's not network programming. "We don't watch TV per se," said Wood. "We watch a lot of things from the Disney channel."

The Garners also watch the Disney channel, but include videos checked out of the library.

Still, there "is a difference between passive and active learning," says Monighan-Nourot. "The more dependent children are on TV, the less they use their imagination.

"The most imaginative children — which correlates with high IQ — are children who prefer not to watch TV."

And though it may seem that a child watching a special on African animals might be learning more than a child playing with a rock he pretends is a spaceship, the experts think otherwise. The more mental work a child does, the better his mind will be prepared to absorb skills such as reading, and TV is not mental work.

"To really learn anything, you have to interact with the source of the data," says psychologist Erik Peper in "Four Arguments For The Elimination Of Television." "With television, you don't really think."

And children don't play — or learn.

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Sunday, December 13, 1987

U.S. illiteracy: The hidden story

Individuals and society suffer consequences

EDITOR'S NOTE: Today's Times marks the introduction of The Literacy Challenge, an on-going report on illiteracy.

Our goal is to alert everyone to a problem that reaches into our cities and neighborhoods, if not our own homes. Each year, the ranks of adults unable to read grow larger.

Our hope is that the success stories of men and women learning to read will encourage others to reach out for help — or to reach out to help others.

The Literacy Challenge is being reported by Clay Kallam. Stories also will appear Monday and Tuesday and periodically after that.

The report is a part of Lesher Communications' campaign against illiteracy that includes the weekly Informed Reader, sponsorship of the Contra Costa Literacy Alliance, and support of Project Second Chance.

By Clay Kallam
Staff writer

Every year, the shadow of illiteracy lengthens.

Every year, more and more Americans find themselves unable to function in the world they live in. Every year, more and more of our fellow citizens fall further behind. Some, discouraged, give up entirely. Others turn to crime, others to drugs.

The cost in dollars is $20 billion a year. The cost in human suffering is immeasurable.

The shadow of illiteracy threatens more than just the children of the poor, the homeless wandering the streets, the immigrants flowing across the border. It threatens both the political and economic fabric of our society and condemns a significant minority of our citizens to life in the corners of society, hidden from the light.

Though there's agreement on the big picture, the experts battle over the details. The United States Census Bureau places the number of illiterates between 17 million and 21 million; the secretary of education estimates there are 46 million; another federal study shows there are 74 million.

According to adult literacy programs in three counties, the problem is extensive here. In Contra Costa County, it is estimated that 100,000 people are functionally illiterate. In Benicia alone, 2,900 of 21,000 residents are unable to read well enough to function in society. In Pleasanton, Livermore and Dublin in Alameda County, the count is 18,000.

The implications of this educational disaster are immense. In 1979, it was estimated that $6 billion a year was spent in the U.S. on welfare and unemployment compensation due to prob-

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lems with illiteracy. In 1985, the 750,000 illiterates in jails across the nation cost taxpayers $6 billion.

But numbers blur. Walk through a shopping mall like Sunvalley or Hilltop or Stoneridge — at best, one of every 12 adults you see cannot read. At worst, one out of three is incapable of comprehending all the stories in a daily newspaper, according to a study by the U.S. Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

The shadow of illiteracy also falls on the political scene, for our democracy is based on the premise that the electorate is informed and aware of the issues of the day. Those who cannot read cannot fully take part in the democratic process and therefore cannot fulfill their obligations as citizens.

And worse, illiteracy feeds on itself. Reading experts maintain the best way to introduce children to reading is for the parents to read to them, but if the parents cannot read themselves, how can these vital first steps be taken? And if a child never sees a book until the first grade, what chance will he or she have once formal education begins?

The poor readers struggle through school and, frustrated, often drop out. In 1983, there were 850,000 dropouts in the United States, and few of those will master the basic skills — reading, writing and arithmetic — needed to cope with an increasingly complex world.

"By 1990," writes Roger Thompson in "Illiteracy In America," "more than half of the labor force will be employed in technical and white-collar jobs."

James Duffy, who spearheaded the Project Literacy US program for the ABC television network, says, "Not too many years from now we may have more jobs than people to fill them, more job skills requirements than skills available."

On the one hand, the demands of the marketplace are becoming stiffer: What qualified as literacy 15 years ago does not today in the age of computers and accelerated change. On the other, the number of adult illiterates in California may be increasing faster than the number served by the various literacy programs.

And what exactly is literacy? In the 19th century, citizens were considered literate if they could sign their names. Early in the 20th century, the ability to read simple instructions was enough. Today, some claim that a functionally literate person needs to have finished high school, and more than a third of our population does not have a high school diploma. And of those who have finished 12th grade, there are many whose basic skills have eroded from disuse, or who graduated without a firm grip on the fundamentals of reading.

And there is no doubt that reading is the most effective way to acquire information in our society.

"Print remains the primary medium for distribution of information in education, business, recreation and almost every other facet of modern life," reports "The Subtle Danger," a look at literacy in the United States.

The problem is very real, but on a national agenda crammed with impending crises and already-arrived disasters, literacy is near the bottom. A yearlong push by various media has opened more eyes to the problem, but teaching has often wound up in the hands of volunteers and newly created organizations.

Though most adults who learn to read do so in community colleges and adult schools, the majority of those students are studying English as a second language. The largest number of illiterates in California, though, are native-born Americans, and yet 79 percent of the state funding goes to those from other nations.

Author Jonathan Kozol, a passionate supporter of adult literacy programs, believes the federal government, now estimated to be spending $347.6 million on literacy programs, must allocate $10 billion a year to solve the problem, but he says such a commitment is unlikely. Failing that, he urges communities to support local programs and to make combatting illiteracy a priority. In time, he believes, a consensus for action may develop, and the nation may decide its 49th place in literacy out of 158 member states of the United Nations is far too low.

Then, perhaps, the shadow of illiteracy in America may begin to shrink. But for the time being, the struggle must take place in crowded classrooms, in private homes, in churches and wherever space and time can be found to bring the light of literacy to those still trapped in the shadows.

WHERE TO VOLUNTEER OR GET HELP

CENTRAL COUNTY

Volunteer tutors or adult learners interested in working learning on a one-to-one basis should call either of the following two numbers:

Diablo Valley Literacy Council, 682-8410
Project Second Chance, 646-6358

Adult learners interested in taking a class should call any of the following numbers:

Diablo Valley College, 685-1230, ext. 320
San Ramon Valley Adult School, 837-7445
Mt. Diablo Adult School, 685-7340
Acalanes Adult School, 935-0170
Martinez Adult School, 228-3276

EAST COUNTY

Volunteer tutors or adult learners interested in working on a one-to-one basis can call this number:

Project Second Chance, 754-8317

Adult learners interested in taking a class can call the following numbers:

Los Medanos College, 439-2181, ext. 3253
Liberty Adult School, 634-2565
Antioch Adult School, 757-6211
Pittsburg Adult School, 439-2031

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Sunday, November 15, 1987

Pacheco man, 56, finds it's not too late to learn

Haskell Patrick's family was blown to California by the winds that scoured the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression.

"My folks wound up here as fruit tramps," the 56-year-old Patrick says, and their Oklahoma origins made them less than welcome.

Even after Patrick's father moved to Walnut Creek in 1937 and began working for the city, the stigma remained.

"I had a chip on my shoulder," recalls Patrick. "Being from Oklahoma, I was as low as you could be."

Patrick's battle for acceptance wasn't aided by the fact that he never learned to read.

"I think the fact that I didn't learn to read was because I had a form of dyslexia," says Patrick, and once he fell behind, he never caught up.

"They just bypassed you," says Patrick of his teachers. "They didn't know how to cope with children who couldn't read. They were more interested in children who could read."

And Patrick didn't make it any easier for them. "I was always fighting other kids," he says. "I blame that on me."

He also fought to avoid being put on the spot in the classroom.

"Everybody called me a dummy and I'd do everything I could to get out of class," he remembers. "You're so damn embarrassed about it. In order to keep your pride you figure ways

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around it."

When he got to Acalanes High School, the damage had been done.

"By that time I was too far gone to want to learn." He only lasted a year.

But Patrick hid his inability to read and managed to carve out a place in society. He became a barber and later ran a service station.

"I had a hell of a memory," says the Pacheco resident proudly. "Someone could read me something once and I knew it."

His wife, Judy, helped him.

"Judy's always been really good to me," he says. "She would fill out my applications for me."

Patrick's intelligence and good memory helped him cope, but he always felt hampered by his hidden handicap.

And when he underwent two open-heart surgeries and a shoulder operation in quick succession, he had a lot of time to think.

"That took a lot of pride out of me," he says. "I made up my mind I had to learn to read."

Judy Patrick helped out again.

"I had heard (an ad) on TV and saw it in the newspaper," she says. "I called the library and said, 'If you want to go for it, it's your opportunity.' "

When Patrick called Project Second Chance in Pleasant Hill, a program that matches volunteer tutors with adult readers on a one-to-one basis, he ran into complications.

"There was a problem getting a tutor," he says. "I had to call back twice."

But Patrick persevered, and in April he began working with Florence Oakes.

The tutoring has gone well, and Patrick gives a lot of the credit to Oakes.

"It makes no difference how well I do. If it wasn't for the teachers I wouldn't have done anything. The teachers are the ones who make the students."

But Patrick had another obstacle to overcome — the Project Second Chance people asked him to participate in an advertising campaign and have his picture shown in the newspaper.

"The hardest part is admitting to others that you can't read," says Patrick. "This was something nobody knew. My kids didn't even know I couldn't read."

But Patrick finally decided to take the plunge. "That was the least I can do. If I can help somebody else . . ."

Judy Patrick, who has watched her husband battle illiteracy, says of Project Second Chance, "This is free, and a person shouldn't be afraid to take advantage of it."

Haskell Patrick hopes others will do what he did.

"I used to think I was the only one," he says. "People made you feel backward — but not so much today."

And Patrick's next goal is to complete what he started so many years ago.

"I would like to get my high school education," he says firmly.

— *Clay Kallam*

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Sunday, November 15, 1987

Young mother grew up without school, on a ranch

"It's like being reborn."

At 26, Cindy Ybarreche is learning to read, and it's changing her life.

"I feel better about myself," she says. "I feel lots better. It's like being locked away in the dark and opening the door."

For Ybarreche, the door shut when she was 2 years old. Her stepfather took her and her two sisters to a ranch in a remote area of British Honduras (now known as Belize), where they stayed for 15 years.

"I helped take care of the ranch. It was a place where people could hunt jaguars and wild animals," she recalls.

School?

"We didn't have any time," says Ybarreche. She and her sisters grew up unable to read.

At 17, Ybarreche was ready to leave the jungle. "I wanted to see what the outside world was like."

She returned to her natural father in Arizona, who "couldn't believe" she was unable to read. "He was shocked," she recalls.

"I get real angry when I think about it. I feel left out of the world."

Though he tried, Ybarreche's father couldn't make up for 12 years of missing education, and she remained illiterate.

Ybarreche got a friend to help her fill out an application and began work at a Phoenix race track. She had grown up with horses and had no trouble handling the job.

"I lived on the racetrack," she says. "I lived in a little tack room."

She began to date an assistant trainer named Larry Ybarreche, but carefully hid her illiteracy.

"I went with him for about two years before he knew I couldn't read. I'd go to a restaurant and I wouldn't even pick up a menu. I'd just order what he ordered.

"Sometimes I got a lot of food."

But Ybarreche had found she could survive in her world without reading. Her years in Central America guaranteed her a job.

"We broke horses for a living," she says of her youth. "That's all I knew."

But now the Ybarreches live in Pleasanton and have two young children — Donald, 2, and Matthew, 9 months — and Ybarreche had to face some hard facts.

"What scared me the most was when my little boy got sick and I couldn't read how much medicine to give him. I could do more things for my family if I knew how to read."

When her mother-in-law saw a commercial on television about an adult literacy program, Ybarreche overcame her fear and signed up. But she heard nothing.

"I plumb forgot about it," she says, "and then Cathy called up."

"Cathy" was Cathy James, a tutor with the Alameda County adult literacy program.

Still, Ybarreche had her doubts.

"I was scared. 'What am I doing?' I thought. It was something I didn't know about."

But Ybarreche arranged to meet with James twice a week, and for the past year, the young mother has been learning what most people learn in elementary school. She and James use a teaching method that places a heavy emphasis on phonics, and they have slowly unraveled the mystery of reading.

"It was when I got a letter from my mom that I realized I could read. I read it to Cathy," says Ybarreche proudly.

"She cried when she finished it," says James. "I am a teacher, but of all the teaching I've done, this is the most rewarding."

Ybarreche's task is far from over. She has a long way to go before she is truly literate, but she can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

"I've always wanted to sit down and read a book," she says, "and one of these days I'll be able to.

"It's like a new life."

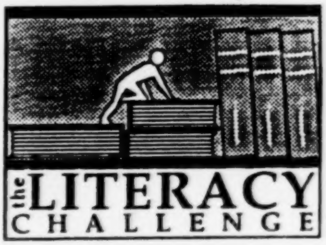
— Clay Kallam

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Sunday, November 15, 1987

Job retraining underscores need for adult literacy

The Literacy Challenge is being reported by Clay Kallam. Another story on the subject will appear Tuesday and periodically after that.

By Clay Kallam
Staff Writer



The well-documented decline of heavy industry is just the tip of the employment iceberg. By the 21st century, the face of the American workplace will have been altered beyond recognition, and workers who cannot adjust will be left behind.

The key to that adjustment will be retraining, for no longer can an employee be able to count on doing the same job for his or her entire career. Those who cannot learn new skills — or upgrade old ones — face a grim future.

"We have a saying here," says Fred Dorman, who works for Pacific Bell in Walnut Creek, " 'Once you begin to understand the system, it's outdated.' "

Dorman's 20 years of service with Pacific Bell are evidence that the times are changing. "Initially I was a frame attendant," which meant doing a basic technical job, he recalls. Now he works with a computer every

"We undertook a major change from paper records," he now says of his job in the department that handles buildings and grounds for PacBell. "Now we sit in front of a keyboard and a VDT."

The transition wasn't easy.

"We had to go take a test to see if we could work in that environment," he remembers. "It was pass or fail."

Once the course began, there was even more pressure. "Not only did we have to learn the technology. It was pass (the periodic tests) or start looking at the want ads."

"One person had a real hard time reading," he says. "It was a real deterrent."

Dorman isn't the only one who has made the connection between the ability to read and the ability to survive the constantly changing demands of the workplace.

Where to volunteer or get help

CENTRAL COUNTY

Volunteer tutors or adult learners interested in working on a one-to-one basis should call either of the following two numbers:

Diablo Valley Literacy Council, 682-8410
Project Second Chance, 646-6358

Adult learners interested in taking a class should call any of the following numbers:

Diablo Valley College, 685-1230, ext. 320
San Ramon Valley Adult School, 837-7445
Mt. Diablo Adult School, 685-7340
Acalanes Adult School, 935-0170
Martinez Adult School, 228-3276

EAST COUNTY

Volunteer tutors or adult learners interested in working on a one-to-one basis can call this number:

Project Second Chance, 754-8317

Adult learners interested in taking a class can call the following numbers:

Los Medanos College, 439-2181, ext. 3253
Liberty Adult School, 634-2565
Antioch Adult School, 757-6211
Pittsburg Adult School, 439-2031

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Monday, November 16, 1987

"Both women and men with more proficient literacy skills achieved superior employment records, avoided prolonged unemployment more frequently and earned higher wages," according to an Educational Testing Service report.

Such trends will be reinforced in the future. Fifty percent of the jobs created between now and the year 2000 will require education beyond high school — which is bad news for the 33.9 percent of adults over 25 who have not finished high school, and the 850,000 students each year who drop out of school.

To get, and keep, a job, education is a necessity, and those who cannot read and write well will struggle in an educational setting.

For example, Pacific Bell gives a basic test to prospective operators, a major entry-level job in the corporation. More than half the applicants fail the test.

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For example, Pacific Bell gives a basic test to prospective operators, a major entry-level job in the corporation. More than half the applicants fail the test.

"A lot of times it's just the time factor," says Linda Mathis, a PacBell placement manager in Walnut Creek. "Reading comprehension is often a problem."

PacBell's experience is not unique. The Department of Labor estimates that 75 percent of the unemployed lack the basic skills necessary to be retrained for high-technology jobs, and those, of course, are the kinds of jobs America is creating.

In just three years, more than half of the labor force will be employed in technical and white-collar jobs, and even the traditionally low-skill employees face greater intellectual demands.

"A maintenance person now has to use a computer," says Mike Romeo, the director of Career Development and Retraining for Pacific Bell in San Ramon. "The level of sophistication is rising."

"We're seeing people coming in with fewer and fewer skills," laments Tina Presta of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. "Now a lot of our hiring is out of state."

Some corporations are responding by trying to upgrade the skills of the people they already employ. Dr. Edwin Land of the Polaroid Corp., which has one of the most activ employee training programs in th nation, says, "The function of industry is not just the making of goods the function of industry is the development of people."

"It's imperative to use the resources inside the company," say PacBell's Romeo, and so an extensive retraining and job counselin program is in place. Not surprisingly, the first step is to get workers accustomed to going to school again.

"Many of our employees hav been away from a learning environment for many years," says Romec "The biggest part is pre-training – not job-specific but just basi skills."

Those who have the skills to b retrained can thrive, but those wh cannot face an uncertain future.

"Those people who have not progressed," says PacBell's Dormar "are no longer here."

That statement may wind up applying to more than just PacBall employees, and it could serve as a economic epitaph for American who are unable to meet the literac demands of the 21st century.

CONTRA COSTA TIMES
Monday, November 16, 1987

Aberdeen, South Dakota 57401 Sunday, June 21, 1987

Illiteracy

Millions lack basic skills

Special Report

By **TOM KISKEN**
American News Writer

Howard does not want to read Shakespeare or Hemingway. He is learning to read so he can find a job.

The 43-year-old Aberdeen resident has been trying to find a job for months. He has been rejected repeatedly, and he's sure his difficulty in reading and writing contributes to his failure in job-hunting.

"It would help me fill out the job applications better," he said. "And I could sort of understand them a little better."

Howard is not alone. The issue of illiteracy has thrust itself onto the nation's conscience during the last few years. A war of numbers is being waged to determine just how severe the problem has become.

"Twenty-five million American adults cannot read the poison warnings on a can of pesticide, a letter from their child's teacher or the front page of a daily paper," Jonathan Kozol wrote in his 1985 book, "Illiterate America."

"An additional 35 million read only at a level which is less than equal to the full survival needs of our society," continued Kozol, whose book evolved out of a year's study on illiteracy. "Together, these 60 million people represent more than one-third of the entire adult population."

Kozol's numbers are widely debated. The U.S. Department of Education released a study in 1985, based on a U.S. Census Bureau project, that said 17 million to 21 million adults are illiterate. And a Public Broadcasting Service television documentary on illiteracy reported that between 23 million and 27 million American adults lack basic reading skills.

"Our real problem is not that people can't read (at all)," said Frank Barnett of the U.S. Department of Education's Adult Literacy Initiative. "Our real problem is that they can't read and then comprehend what they read."

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS
Sunday, June 21, 1987

The problem has prompted nationwide concern.

Several groups, ranging from the General Federation of Women's Clubs to PBS and ABC, have started literacy campaigns aimed at teaching adults to read.

Project Literacy U.S.; a grassroots campaign to reach non-readers, has helped form more than 300 community literacy task forces across the nation. Hot-line numbers have been publicized and efforts have been made to refer illiterates to places where they can learn to read.

South Dakota has also recognized the illiteracy issue. The State Library has received a federal grant of $25,000 through the Library Services and Construction Act to fund local literacy projects. The library has applied for a second grant, also $25,000, from the same organization.

A statewide literacy coalition is in the formative stages. The group will coordinate statewide literacy efforts.

Fourteen local literacy projects have been formed in the state. One, the Aberdeen Area Literacy Council, has set its sights on illiterates in Brown, Day, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson, Spink and Marshall counties. Organizers say the council will function as a referral service, pairing non-readers with volunteer tutors.

The Hub Area Multi District Vocational Center in Aberdeen offers remedial reading evening courses from September to April.

Howard, who blamed his difficulty on a now remedied hearing disability, enrolled in the Hub City Multi District Vocational Center last winter to learn to read. It's working.

"The class was fun and you learned something," he said. "I'll go back again."

The Lake Region Vocational Education Center in Webster also offers remedial classes.

Statewide, about 100 non-readers have sought help through literacy task forces.

Gene Dickson, director of adult basic education for the South Dakota Department of Education, said the state has the sixth lowest illiteracy level — adults with less than a fifth-grade education — in the nation.

"On a statewide level, South Dakota can be pleased with its illiteracy rate," Dickson said.

State residents have a high awareness of the literacy issue, Dickson said, adding that the state also has fewer immigrants than states with relatively high illiteracy rates. The immigrants, he said, may be literate in their first language but not in English.

The highest illiteracy rates are in New York, Texas and Pennsylvania. Alaska has the lowest level of illiteracy in the nation, followed by Vermont, Delaware, Montana and North Dakota.

Dickson said the state considers any adult older than 25 who has less than a fifth-grade education to be within the target group for illiteracy. An adult with less than an eighth-grade education may be functionally illiterate.

Many people with less than a fourth-grade education can read and write, Dickson acknowledged. The state uses the education indicator for lack of anything better.

"It's the only figures we have," he said, adding there is a push to come up with a better literacy assessment.

Dickson said that in South Dakota, 5,994 adults who are at least 25 years old have less than a fourth-grade education, according to the 1980 state census. Another 13,319 have less than an eighth-grade education and fit the functional illiteracy category.

"We're looking at about 20,000 people in our target group (of people who need literacy work)," Dickson said, adding that the group composes 4.9 percent of the state's total population.

The level of literacy in Brown County is on par with the state average.

Of the county's 20,659 adults, 25 years old and older, 350 adults fit the state's definition of illiteracy, according to the 1980 census, and another 711 fit the functional illiteracy category. About 5.1 percent of the county's adults fit in the two categories combined.

The number of people in surrounding counties with less than an eighth-grade education, and the percentage of the adult population 25 and over, according to the census, are: McPherson County, 448, 16.8 percent; Edmunds, 384, 12.1; Spink, 600, 10.5; Day, 367, 7.2; Marshall, 211, 6.2 and Faulk, 86, 4.1.

Becky Prosser, chairwoman of the Aberdeen Area Literacy Council, said of the local numbers:

"In this day and in our developed society there shouldn't be any (non-readers). I can see it in one of the underdeveloped countries but here there should be zero percent, or at least less than 1 (percent)."

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS
Sunday, June 21, 1987

Westport man winning fight for literacy

By TOM KISKEN
American News Writer

Dan Schlosser is the best reader in his class. The 29-year-old Westport man can struggle his way through a fourth-grade reading text.

Schlosser was closer to a second-grade reading level three months ago when he joined the adult basic education class at Hub Area Multi District Vocational Center. For someone who couldn't look up a name in the phone book, two grades in three months is a big achievement.

"I can find some names (in the phone book) now," he said. "I can do it a lot better than I could before. At least now I can pick up the paper and I can do (read) it. It takes me awhile but I can read it."

Schlosser has a job working on road construction. He is married and owns a home in Westport. He is a hunter, bowler and a gifted mechanic.

"Give me a handtool or a machine and I'm right at home," Schlosser said.

If tools are Schlosser's friends, books are fierce enemies. For years, he has wanted to take a welding class but has never dared for fear he will be handed a textbook.

The written word has been a constant barrier in Schlosser's life. It has prevented him from pursuing higher-paying jobs, answering his own mail and reading to his two sons.

Schlosser grew up in the Westport-Frederick area. He attended four different public schools for more than nine years without learning to read beyond a remedial level.

Asked to explain his reading difficulties, Schlosser shook his head in bewilderment and tried to pinpoint the reason.

"I probably didn't care about reading," he said. "I just hung out with the wrong crowd, always with the rowdier people. They didn't really care about learning either."

The kids in Schlosser's crowd were more interested in cars and partying than in doing well at school. Most dropped out.

Schlosser's difficulty with reading also affected him in other classes. His grades were C's, D's and F's. Yet, he does not remember ever being placed in a special reading class or being held back a grade level.

In the 10th grade, Schlosser ended his school career after being suspended for smoking cigarettes.

"I quit school and a week later I got a (construction) job," he said.

At first, Schlosser did not think much about his reading inability. He said it did not bother him that he could not read his own mail.

"Back then it didn't really matter," he said. "But now it does."

Reading evolved into a daily nemesis.

"Most of the people around here know I can't read, but sometimes it is embarrassing," he said. "Sometimes a guy will ask me to read something and I have to tell him I can't."

Something as basic as a driver's license can give Schlosser a scare. He obtained his license with the help of a friendly examiner, who gave a verbal rather than a written exam, but worries about retaking the test.

"He got stopped speeding one weekend when we went to Sioux Falls," recalled his wife, Deb. "When he came back to the car, his first question was, 'Do I have to take the test over?' "

(See SCHLOSSER, Page 2A)

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Schlosser: Lack of reading a liability

(Continued from Page 1A)

Reading-related problems also cropped up at work. Schlosser said he didn't pursue promotions at an Aberdeen factory because of paperwork. One of the better aspects of his current job is that there is little reading, he said.

Home life was no different.

"He'd go somewhere and leave me a note and I couldn't read it all," Deb recalled. "He couldn't read to the kids."

Schlosser said he is concerned that his boys — ages 3 and 6 — might follow in his path. He said he will do whatever he can to keep them in school.

"If they'd drop out, they'd be just like me," he said.

Deb, a college graduate, said she tried to teach her husband to read but never got far.

"We had some frustrating times," she said. "I know how to read, but how do you teach someone to read?"

Deb read about the adult basic education class and persuaded her husband to give it a try.

"The first day was kind of scary," Schlosser remembered. "But after that it was easy, real easy."

"He told me that it makes it easier because all the people have the same problem," Deb added.

Schlosser is one of six regular students who spent two and a half hours a week this spring at the vocational school learning to read and write. The remedial class has ended for the year, but Schlosser signed up for the fall session.

Students at the class learned how to sound out, or decode, words. Schlosser said he now can figure out the bigger words rather than guessing at them.

The class moved at a methodical pace. Schlosser and other pupils — most of whom associate school with failure and frustration — say they appreciated the relaxed demands.

"Even if it comes slowly, you start to catch on and at least you're learning," said one student, who has been attending the class for several years.

Schlosser's goal for the summer is to work on his own and pass the fifth-grade reading test. His long-range goal is to obtain his high school equivalency.

Yet, even if Schlosser never gets his high school equivalency, his education has paid dividends.

"This guy I know is in the same boat I am," Schlosser said. "I told him about this class and he's talking about going."

Schlosser said he would encourage any non-reader to attend the class. His argument is a simple one.

"It makes you feel damn good."

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Sunday, June 21, 1987

Tutor, student tackle reading together

60-year-old farmer learns to read, write

The 60-year-old farmer could produce 1,000 acres of grain, but could not pronounce the letter J.

"Yah," he said repeatedly, trying to pronounce the first sound in the word jumping.

Tutor Alfreda Nash, a 53-year-old housewife and part-time bookkeeper, kept after the student, asking him to repeat first the word and then the letter sound.

"No, try again," she said after each failed attempt, finally edging her response with emotion, "No!"

"I was afraid of that," the farmer said with a frustrated laugh.

Nash, who lives on a farm outside of Mansfield, has been teaching Thomas (not his real name) to read in weekly one-on-one sessions. Today, her student can pronounce every letter in the alphabet. He can read many children's books and can make his way through a newspaper.

And Thomas has been asked to be South Dakota's representative at the First National Student Literacy Congress in Philadelphia in September.

"That is wonderful. I just feel so proud," said Nash of her student's accomplishment. "I think the best thing is that he got self-confidence.

"When he first came here, I had to crank every word out of him. Now he walks straighter. He talks with sounds that you can hear. I think he feels better about himself."

Tutor gets credit

Thomas credits his newfound reading ability to Nash. He said he feels "very lucky" to have found an instructor who makes learning easy.

"One thing about her is she's real easygoing," he said. "If I can't get it right away, she's patient. She has helped me a whole lot."

Nash is a gregarious, energetic person. She talks, and teaches, with vigor.

Nash is a gregarious, energetic person. She talks, and teaches, with vigor.

"I think you have to have drive, you have to have motivation," she said. "If you really are an avid reader yourself, you feel sorry for anyone who can't read."

Nash has thrown herself into the literacy project. She tutors Thomas once a week and is learning to become a tutor-trainer with the Aberdeen Literacy Council, for which she is the treasurer. She also manages to find time to serve as public relations officer for the South Dakota statewide literacy task force.

A long hour

"I give this (literacy) one hour a week," she said with a sly smile. "My hour starts at Sunday noon and ends Saturday at midnight."

Nash's interest in literacy begins with herself. She is a reading addict, consuming about four books a week.

"When I was unhappy, even as a teen-ager, I could hide in a book," she said. "I'm not an escapist, but I love fiction."

Despite Nash's love for books, her three children had difficulty learning to read. The children, now ages 30 to 34, can read but never captured their mother's enthusiasm for reading. So, when Nash first heard about national programs to promote literacy, she thought of her family.

"The first time I heard it, I said, 'That's wonderful they're going to teach children to read,' " she said. "I thought if only my kids could have had that."

Nash got involved after hearing a commercial asking for reading tutors. She pursued the opportunity and in November attended a tutors' workshop in Huron. She joined the Aberdeen Literacy Council and, on the day after her first council meeting, was asked to teach Thomas to read.

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(18)

Reading problem hid

Until he contacted the literacy council, Thomas hid his reading inability.

"I never told a soul about it," Thomas said. "I'd go to Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) meetings and a man would come in and explain the program, but I couldn't write nothing down. I always sat in the back for the simple reason that nobody would know."

"Sometimes, they'd hand out papers for us to fill out and I'd shove them in my pocket and then worry that they'd ask for us to fill them out and turn them in. One time I just handed it in with nothing on it. I suffered every meeting I went to."

Thomas never wrote a check. Instead, he would let the clerk fill out the amount and then he would scrawl his name on the bottom.

When he needed new parts, Thomas would point to a picture and the salesperson would locate the item.

"It's kind of hard to buy a piece of machinery when you can't read," he said. "I had a heckuva time."

Thomas attributed his inability to read in part to inadequate schooling. He dropped out of country school in the fourth grade after being held back several years.

"I probably needed special attention, but I never got it," he said.

After dropping out, Thomas farmed with his father. He said he learned about farming from doing it.

Thomas said he has done well for himself and was once honored as his county's outstanding young farmer. He credited his success to hard work and a natural talent in mechanics.

Although he managed without reading, Thomas always knew his life would be easier if he could read. For years, he wanted to learn to do it but did not know where to go.

Timing right

Last winter, he called a telephone number given in a television commercial on literacy. He was referred to Ed Wickre of the Aberdeen Literacy Council.

"He (Wickre) said I'd come just at the right time," Thomas remembered. "He said there was a teacher that came in just that morning that I should meet."

So, Nash and Thomas became a pair.

Before their first lesson, Nash said she struggled with self-doubts. Her only previous teaching experience was with her own children and in Sunday school.

"I didn't think I could do it," she said, recalling the first lesson. "I had a little trouble getting my lips apart. I had no idea what I was going to say."

Thomas said he struggled with his own doubts, wondering if he could learn to read. But he stuck with the course, and found it easier than expected.

Thomas acknowledges he still has a long way to go. The hardest part so far is telling the difference between the sounds of some consonants, he said.

Nash praises her student. He is learning "beautifully," she said. He still makes mistakes and struggles at writing but is headed in the right direction.

Weekly sessions

Thomas and Nash meet every week at her farm and spend more than an hour on lessons. Recently, they took a field trip to Aberdeen where Thomas was given the task of locating different addresses.

Nash said she and her student have established a close friendship.

"My student and I have a rapport," she said. "He has put himself in my hands and we are both learning. . . . He's 60 years old and I kind of think of him as my little brother."

Thomas already has overcome stumbling blocks. Two months ago, he wrote his first check.

"That was something," he said. "It was so easy, I couldn't believe it. I can do it."

Thomas' next goal is to write a letter to his sister in Minneapolis.

As for the teacher, Nash said she gets as much from the lessons as her student.

"My whole life has been mainly programmed around family and children," she said. "This (the literacy lessons) gives me a sense of adult accomplishment. It's a surprise that I can do it, that the Lord has given me a talent that I didn't know I have."

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS
Sunday, June 21, 1987

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Aberdeen American News Sun., June 21, 1987

Illiteracy

Learning to read challenging for some

Learning to read starts with infancy and continues throughout the school years. The learning comes naturally for some, but is a struggle from the start for others.

Schools have the job of identifying the quick learners from the not-so-quick and making sure that all children are given the attention needed to learn to read.

Virginia Tobin and Dr. Bob Neely, administrators with the Aberdeen School District, said local schools do a good job teaching children to read and pointed to above average scores in standard reading tests as proof. Students' reading abilities are assessed repeatedly and probably 10 percent of the students go through special reading programs, they said.

But Tobin, assistant superintendent for student services, said reading begins long before children enter school. By sharing books and reviewing the alphabet with preschoolers, parents can help children get off on the right foot.

"There's been people who read to children in the womb and that has been proven to make a difference," Tobin said.

On the other hand, parents who rarely read themselves and do not make an effort to bring books into their children's lives may be asking for trouble, according to Lynette Ball, team teacher of the lower-level reading class at Aberdeen Central High School.

'It's kind of scary when you see that these kids don't have any magazines at home," she said. "There's a correlation in there."

Reading levels vary

Once children begin school, their reading levels vary greatly, Tobin said. Some are reading when they enter first grade; others are at the level of the average 3-year-old.

The children need to be separated by their abilities, Tobin said. A child who needs special reading attention but does not receive it may be facing a lifelong aversion to reading.

This fall, the public schools will use a new reading series, the Scott Foresman program, in grades one through six, Tobin said. The program incorporates instruction aimed at the above-average, average and below-average reader.

Some children have learning disabilities that deter reading, Tobin said. Learning disabled students are of average intelligence but have a hard time reading because of auditory problems, visual deterrents or other problems.

Aberdeen public schools try to catch reading troubles early with screening that begins at age 3 and continues throughout school, Tobin said.

A Chapter One reading program provides specialized instruction in small groups for K-3 students.

While younger students still have enthusiasm for reading and learning, older students are harder to reach, according to Frieda Bender, remedial reading teacher at Simmons Elementary School.

"The older youths feel it (reading difficulty) is more of a stigma," she said.

Bender said the smaller size of remedial classes gives her an advantage over the classroom teacher facing a roomful of students.

"The greatest advantage is I can keep a close eye on them," she said.

> "Anytime someone wants to learn, it's easy to teach them."
>
> **Luke Miller, special education teacher**

While formal reading classes are held for students in grades one through eight, specialized efforts to improve the abilities of slow readers continue at Aberdeen Central High School.

Jim Kaiser and Lynette Ball teach classes for sophomores, juniors and seniors who are behind class levels in reading and language arts. The students' reading abilities vary greatly, Kaiser said. The majority are one or two grade levels behind their class; a few may have as low as a fourth-grade reading level.

"There are some kids who have never read a book from cover to cover," Kaiser said. "When they do, it feels good."

Many of the students in the class are potential dropouts who have never done well in school, Kaiser said. The specialized class allows students to compete with others at their own level, Kaiser said, expressing confidence the class has kept some in school.

"By and large if the kids come in here and have success, they feel good about it," he said. "They'll get a 'B' in the class and say, 'My mom won't believe this.' "

Enthusiasm crucial

That enthusiasm is crucial, according to Luke Miller, special education teacher at Aberdeen Central and remedial reading instructor at Hub Area Multi District Vocational Center.

"Anytime someone wants to learn, it's easy to teach them," Miller said, adding that his adult students usually have that desire.

"They (the adults) are there because they want to learn to read," Miller said. "I wish the high school students had that dedication."

If high school graduates pursue further education, the reading demands become more difficult. College students are faced with nightly demands to read, and to comprehend complicated, technical text. According to a national study, many young adults are not ready for the demand.

The National Assessment of Education Progress published a report earlier this year that incorporated a survey of reading and writing skills of 55,000 public and private-school students. The survey found that while 97 percent of the young adults had literacy skills adequate for surface understanding of reading material, only about half had skills to deal with high school text material.

And only 21 percent had advanced reading skills needed for college, professional and technical reading material.

Problems in college

Some college freshmen do have problems with higher-level reading, said Dr. Forrest Rich Allred, professor of education at Northern State College. A diagnostic reading test of Northern State's freshmen, taken in 1974, showed students' reading abilities on the average were below the national level for college freshmen. Five freshmen in the survey tested as low as at the sixth-grade reading level.

Allred said he has no reason to believe reading abilities have improved significantly over the years.

Comprehension is one area that needs improvement, he said. Too many youths can pronounce the words, but fail to grasp the meaning.

Schools need to hire more reading specialists and spend more time with the slow learners, Allred said.

"Too many teachers get a youngster in the class with problems and don't adjust instruction," he said.

Stressing that he was not criticizing any particular school, Allred acknowledged Aberdeen schools are making an effort to improve reading instruction. He said that as schools spend more time on reading and writing, students' skills should improve.

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Literacy group wants to help non-readers

The Aberdeen Area Literacy Council is working toward a day when adult illiterates will make one phone call and be learning to read and write within days.

The literacy council formed about a year ago with the idea of bringing the printed word to adult illiterates in Brown, Spink, Marshall, Day, Edmunds, Faulk and McPherson counties.

Earlier this month, the council trained 23 volunteer tutors and the hope is that each will eventually teach an illiterate to read.

BECKY PROSSER

"The key is to let people know we're here," said Becky Prosser, outgoing council chairwoman. "We're counting on a lot of encouragement from friends and family (of non-readers)."

Prosser urges anyone who can't read, or who knows a non-reader, to contact the council by calling 225-0472.

According to the 1980 census, Brown County has 20,659 adults who are 25 or older. About 1,061 adults have less than eight years of education.

The South Dakota Department of Education considers adults with less than an eighth-grade education to be within the functionally illiterate target group and those with less than a fifth-grade education to be in the illiterate category.

The literacy council also points out the census shows that more than 20 percent of the county's adults 25 and older, or 4,158 people, have less than nine years of schooling.

Job seeker makes impression

Prosser, who most recently taught at Bath Elementary School, said she became aware of illiteracy in Aberdeen while working as an education coordinator at the Career Planning Center in 1986. Several non-readers came to the center, she said, and one in particular made an impression:

A farmer was preparing to file for bankruptcy and came to the center to investigate other jobs, Prosser said.

"He had his wife with him and she filled out the application and then he asked if she could write the answers for him on the interest inventory that we give," Prosser said.

"He wanted to take his high school equivalency and he had problems reading. He asked where he could get help. And I said no place," she said, noting that he lived about 75 miles from the Hub Area Multi District Vocational Center, which offers remedial reading classes.

Struck by the plight of the non-reading farmer and others like him, Prosser began toying with the idea of a literacy task force. She had been involved with a literacy program in Bemidji, Minn., and saw the need for a similar project locally.

Another Aberdeen resident, Ted Kneebone, was also troubled by the thought of illiteracy in the local community.

"Knowing how to read and write is essential," said Kneebone, a librarian at the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped. "Someone who can't is handicapped."

Kneebone said he was more interested in teaching someone to read than in forming a literacy council. But when the proposal was made to put together a task force, he agreed to help. And in May 1986, Prosser, Kneebone and Howard and Cathy Coffin formed the Aberdeen Area Literacy Council under the direction of the South Dakota State Library, which is heading the state's literacy project.

State council lays groundwork

The council spent its first six months recruiting members and doing groundwork for the project, Prosser said. Officers still are awaiting word on a $7,000 federal grant to be used to train tutors, purchase supplies, organize promotions and further needs.

Prosser said the grant would make the going easier, but the council will survive with or without the funds. Several donations have already been received, including money from government bodies, local businesses, churches and others.

Prosser is leaving the council, and the area, later this summer to move to Moorhead, Minn. Pointing at the interest shown at the first tutor workshop, she expressed confidence the council will continue to grow and become a permanent part of the community.

The council hopes to reach 20 students and train 40 volunteer tutors in its first year, Prosser said. Other goals including holding two additional tutor workshops and having one of its members, Alfreda Nash, become certified as a tutor-trainer.

The most difficult goal, Prosser and other council members say, will be finding non-readers.

Four students are meeting with tutors and another eight have come forward and will be paired with tutors, Prosser said.

"One of the people met with a tutor and admitted that his wife, brother-in-law and other members of his family don't read and now they're all going to learn," Prosser said.

Reluctant to seek help

But, most illiterates are reluctant to come forward. They look on their inability to read as a stigma.

"The adults we're dealing with are very sensitive," said Gene Dickson, director of adult basic education for the South Dakota Department of Education. "But ultimately something will happen. They may have a grandchild ask them to order a medicine bottle or they may say, 'My kids came home from school today and I couldn't help them with their homework.' "

Prosser said the literacy council has to make a name for itself so the non-readers will know where to turn.

Kneebone suggested that friends and family can play an important role in bringing adult illiterates to the council.

"The wife, kids and friends at work may need to sit down with the person and go over the reasons why they think the person should learn to read," Kneebone suggested. "They may need to say, 'George, get help.' "

Nash said the first step is the hardest. The non-readers have to overcome the feeling that their inability to read is a result of being stupid, or unable to read.

"People shouldn't be embarrassed to get help," Nash said. "It's not their own fault and they can do something about it."

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS
Sunday, June 21, 1987

Illiteracy

No room for illiteracy on farm

In today's world of agribusiness there is little room for illiteracy.

Agriculture is South Dakota's biggest industry. Between constant changes in the federal farm program and advancements in technology, farmers are faced with nearly as much paperwork as fieldwork. The non-reading farmer — the one who can't handle the printed word and depends on hard work in the field to save him — may be facing a new world.

Ken Loken, senior vice president in charge of the agricultural portfolio at Norwest Bank in Aberdeen, made his point by displaying financial forms filled with small type and complicated directions.

"If a borrower came here and he didn't know what he was signing, I couldn't in good conscience go through with the deal," Loken said.

According to the South Dakota Department of Labor's 1986 Survey of Agriculture, 14 percent of the farmers surveyed had between one and eight years of education. Of those farmers anticipating leaving agriculture, nearly 20 percent had between one and eight years of education.

Mark Rosenberg, Spink County agricultural agent, said he doubted there are more non-readers in the farming community than in any other sector. He acknowledged that farmers who can't read have their work cut out for them.

Not only do farmers receive written information from the county agent, Rosenberg said, they need to read ASCS mail, chemical labels, balance sheets and trade magazines.

"With all this information written up, a farmer unable to read would be missing out on a lot," Rosenberg said. "If he can't read a price list, it would cost him quite a bit.

"You can't say he would not be able to farm but he'd be at a disadvantage."

(85)

Illiteracy rate high on reservation

Native Americans on parts of the Rosebud Reservation have an average literacy level between the fifth and seventh grades, according to preliminary returns of a 14-month study.

Final numbers are not in, according to Cheryl Crazy Bull, who led the Sinte Gleska College's 1985-86 study covering more than 20 tribal communities in south central South Dakota. But results from two communities have been tabulated and showed that average reading and writing skills fell between the fifth- and seventh-grade levels.

"That bothers me," she said. "I would like to see it between the ninth- and 10th-grade level as a minimum. At that level, you can read newspapers and magazines."

Adults at the fifth- to seventh-grade reading level can read elementary materials, but may have trouble computing their income tax or reading a news magazine, Crazy Bull said.

300 tested

The literacy study was funded by a $78,600 grant from the Indian Education Division of the U.S. Department of Education. About 300 reservation residents were tested for remedial reading and writing skills, Crazy Bull said. A functional literacy test and a demographic survey were also included.

As a result of the study, Crazy Bull and others started a $25,000 literacy program funded by the federal Library Services and Construction Act. Based at the Sinte Gleska College library in Mission, the program pairs volunteer tutors with adult illiterates in the reservation communities of Black Pipe and St. Francis. So far, nearly 20 tutors and about 10 students have participated.

Ollie Napesni, a retired school teacher from St. Francis, has been meeting on and off with an elderly woman who speaks Lakota Sioux, but can say little in English and can not read at all.

"What I'd really like to do is have her write some at least and learn to speak well," Napesni said. "She has a car but has never had a driver's license. I would like her to eventually get a license."

Language is barrier

Napesni said she agreed to be a tutor because of her memories of learning English as a Native American child in country schools.

"I could only say 'yes' or 'no' in English," she said. "I could understand very little. I really had problems. I had such a rough time that first year that I often cried."

Napesni said she can help other Native Americans learn to read English because she understands what they are experiencing. And she can also communicate to her students in Lakota Sioux.

While Napesni and others have committed their time to be tutors, it has been more difficult to locate students, according to Lorraine A. Walking Bull, literacy program coordinator.

"They are ashamed to let people know they can't read," Walking Bull said. "It's hard for them to admit they can't read. It's just like getting alcoholics to admit they are alcoholics."

Walking Bull said she has tried to attract nonreaders who have previously used the college's community outreach programs. She hopes these students will bring family members and friends into the program.

Some students have joined the literacy program and later said they did not have enough time and dropped out, Walking Bull said. But other nonreaders seemed determined to stick with the program and have talked about pursuing the equivalent of a high school diploma.

Literacy work needed

The literacy work is needed, according to Rodney Bordeaux, a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribal council and the executive director of Local Indian Education.

"There are always people who fall through the cracks," he said. "Through the outreach programs of the college, they (educators) have the ability to reach those people."

Walking Bull and Crazy Bull both said they hope to keep the literacy program alive. They have applied for another federal grant and hope to expand literacy efforts to other communities on the reservation.

"We intend to make the program a permanent part of the reservation," Crazy Bull said.

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS
Special Report
Sunday, June 21, 1987

Poverty may be root of woes

Alcoholism, jobless rate all contribute to learning problems

Ask Native Americans in Sisseton about adult illiteracy and most can think of someone who fits the definition.

"I had one young man come in to get his General Education Development (high school equivalency) and he couldn't read or write," recalled one Native American, Nancy Harles of Sisseton Wahpeton Community College. "Then he told me he went through the 10th grade."

Unemployment, dropping out of high school and alcoholism are all contributing factors to why some adults in the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe can't read well, according to Ed Red Owl. He is social and economic development planner for the tribal government, which serves about 3,500 Native Americans in Marshall, Day and Roberts counties.

"I can think of a number of people who are functionally illiterate as adults," said Red Owl. "I think the principal reasons are social reasons that come with poverty.

"A family gets wrapped up in poverty and other social problems. The children drop out of school and are illiterate."

Illiteracy high

According to the 1980 census, about 303 adults, 25 years old and older, on the reservation have less than eight years of education and fit the functional illiteracy definition used by the South Dakota Department of Education. Statewide, about 52 percent of Native Americans, 25 and older, have completed high school, according to the census.

Red Owl said about 85 percent of tribal members are unemployed. About 1,356 of the tribe's 2,199 adults, ages 18-64, receive welfare payments. And about 54.5 percent of tribal deaths during 1981-83 were alcohol-related.

Literacy is one way Native Americans can begin to put those ugly numbers behind them, Red Owl said.

"I think if people were literate and if people went to the library and read they would learn that there are other alternatives to poverty," he said. "Literacy is a step toward improvement."

Red Owl said many Native Americans can read simple materials. But too few can read well enough to improve their lot in life, he said.

"My definition of illiteracy is the ability to read about something and understand it — to take Time and Newsweek, to follow national issues," he said. "I would give my left leg to see tribal members share that view. Literacy should open doors."

Tribal school open

One educational alternative tribal members can consider is the Tiospa Zina Tribal School, about seven miles south of Sisseton. The 268-student school was built by the tribe and is federally funded. The elementary school began in 1981; the high school opened in fall 1986.

Lee Ochsner, high school principal, said the school inherited many students who had reading problems. He said keeping the students in school and teaching them to read go hand-in-hand.

"If they're out of school they get further behind," he said. "The key is to get them here and make it interesting."

Each morning the school holds a short cultural activity program which not only teaches Native American history but gives everybody in the school a chance to get together, Ochsner said.

The tribal school also uses its proximity to tribal social services — including programs for alcohol and drug abuse — to address students' problems while keeping them in school, Ochsner said.

Gyla Robertson, high school counselor, said parents are involved with education at the tribal school.

"We have people who take the time to talk to parents and make them keep their kids in school," she said.

Emphasis on culture

Clifford Blue Dog has three children enrolled at the tribal school. He opted for the tribal school because of its emphasis on culture.

"I want my children growing up knowing who they are," he said.

As far as literacy, Blue Dog said he is satisfied his children are getting what they need. He noted that parents bear some of the responsibility for teaching children to read.

"I place great emphasis on books. They're lying all over the house," he said. "The children have all kinds of children's books. The whole idea is for them to learn to respect the books."

Gilbert Gill, a founding member of the tribal school, said the school is more attuned to the needs of Native Americans than public schools.

The tribal school was started after several Native American parents pulled their kids from area public schools in reaction to what they contended was inadequate education, Gill said. The parents proposed that the tribal school be built and later that same year, in 1981, the elementary school began.

Gill's 16-year-old son, Robert, is a student at the tribal school and previously attended public schools in Sisseton. He said he enjoys the educational atmosphere at the tribal school.

"It feels different (than the public schools)," he said. "Everybody is always smiling and everybody's always up to learning."

Enrollment growing

The tribal school's enrollment is climbing, but many Native Americans still attend public schools in Sisseton and Waubay. Dissension seems to exist between the tribal and public schools.

"I don't feel the public school locally feels it has the mission to deal with social and home problems," Red Owl said. "The result is Indian students drop out."

Sisseton Public Schools Superintendent Maurice Rabenberg would not comment on Native American dropouts because of a pending lawsuit in which tribal residents are challenging the at-large system of voting for public school board candidates.

According to Sisseton High School figures, the dropout rate for Native Americans in 1985-86 was 19.5 percent. Comparatively, the dropout rate for non-Indians was 0.91 percent. Some tribal members maintained that the Native American dropout rate is much higher than the public schools claim.

While the dropout rate is a concern, educators said many tribal dropouts pursue high school equivalency diplomas. For years, the tribe operated a General Education Development (GED) program, but transferred it to the Sisseton Wahpeton Community College in fall 1986.

Room for improvement

Nancy Harles, who runs the college's high school equivalency and adult basic education programs, said most of the work she does centers on GED instruction and testing. She has not yet taught a student to read.

"I think we need to work on that," she said. "I think people see us more as a GED and not as ABE (adult basic education)... I think there's more people (illiterates) out there."

Harles acknowledged there is room for improvement in adult education. With a bigger staff and offices in different reservation districts, more adult illiterates could be reached, she said.

Such a plan would take more money, Harles said, adding that additional funds are always hard to find.

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS
Sunday, June 21, 1987

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THE SAN DIEGO UNION
Sunday, October 18, 1987

A Special Report:

Prisoners of Print

Millions of Americans, including some 350,000 in San Diego County, are trapped by illiteracy. To get by, they lie, bluff or drop out. Still, they are caught in the Information Age. But there is hope. A growing coalition of businessmen, educators, journalists and volunteers wants to give them the gift of reading.

Opine up new Wold For Me To With A
Letter And Read A Book.

— 41-year-old man, cement contractor

DID YOU KNOW?

Fifty percent of the country's prison inmates are not able to read newspaper headlines. And last year, 40 percent of the armed services' enlistees were found to read below the eighth-grade level.

Key word is 'help' for millions who can't read

THE SAN DIEGO UNION
Sunday, October 18, 1987

1,500 tutors assist 2,000 illiterates in S.D. programs

By Mark Sauer
Staff Writer

Fernando Serrano is a slow-talking, slightly built ex-convict with rheumy eyes that often flash with anger. He describes his life darkly, desperately, characterizing himself as a prisoner of hell.

The reason: He can't read.

"I graduated from San Diego High School (in 1971) and I felt like a fool standing there in my cap and gown," said Serrano, 34, who recently spent two years in state prison for possession of heroin. "There I was, getting a diploma, and I couldn't even read a little kid's book. I felt like everyone was laughing at me."

Serrano says he can't get a job, can't get a driver's license, can't move from his parents' house into a place of his own, and has only junkies for friends — all because he can't read.

He says he fell to heroin to escape his miserable reality and that his bitter outlook on life is the result of being uneducated.

"I can't read a menu, I've never read a newspaper, I can't read a job application," he said. "Sometimes I get so mad about it that I feel like killing myself."

> 'We have people who desperately want to learn, but many don't have the stability in their lives to stay with a program like this. We go for little victories . . .'
>
> **— Lynda Jones, S.D. literacy coordinator**

Serrano, who has a brother and sister who did well in school, graduated and got good jobs, said that when he couldn't keep up in class teachers ignored him to concentrate on students who were making progress. He said he fantasizes about holding his former teachers and principals hostage until they promise him the education he never got.

"Sometimes I wish I was back in prison," he said. "At least I got my meals and clean clothes and didn't have to worry about getting along with normal people in the normal world."

Serrano is one of millions of adult Americans — including perhaps several hundred thousand in San Diego County — who are functionally illiterate.

They cannot read well enough to understand warning labels, instructions, menus, signs and maps, sales contracts, the daily newspaper or other printed elements of everyday life.

But Serrano is not typical.

Those in the burgeoning literacy movement say there is no typical illiterate, that reasons for being unable to read and write vary with the individual and that each person suffers this critical deficiency in his or her own way.

There is such stigma attached to illiteracy that the biggest hurdle to overcome is getting an adult to admit the deficiency to a stranger — even a tutor who is highly sensitive to the problem.

In San Diego County, about 2,000 illiterate adults are being helped now by 1,500 tutors in the seven programs that make up the newly formed San Diego County Literacy Network. For about 50 percent of the learners, English is a second language. Those "ESL" learners seek help in droves because there is no stigma attached to their inability to read and write English as there is to American-born adults.

Illiterates, often with the help of spouses or family members, become masters at hiding the fact that they can't read. They often carry newspapers; they claim to have left their reading glasses home when asked to read something; they take forms home to "study them further"; they always order "the special" in restaurants.

Some illiterates have gone to remarkable extremes.

One, with help, memorized a thick company manual and, when asked during meetings, would open to specific pages and recite the text, pretending to read; a building engineer would take blueprints or instructions home, have his wife read them to him, and then discuss the project or make repairs from memory; a young father would pretend to read his child's books at bedtime until the youngster could read well enough himself to discover that dad was faking.

"There are many reasons people fail to learn to read," said Lynda Jones, coordinator of the San Diego Literacy Network and administrator of the Carlsbad City Library Adult Learning Program.

"It could have been emotional trauma at a critical age — the death of a parent, sexual abuse, divorce. The child is in school but his mind is [illegible] Some kids get sick for long periods; others move and change schools often and fall behind and never catch up," she said.

"And some just don't catch it when they're coming up in school. But even people with learning disabilities can learn to read and change their lives."

Illiterates are often so ashamed of their inability to read that they guard the secret even from loved ones. One man in his 70s hid it from his wife for the first 33 years of their 43-year marriage, Jones said. "Imagine living with it for all that time."

There are millions of functionally illiterate Americans including a surprisingly high percentage of high school — and even college — graduates. But nobody knows how many and that is a matter of heated debate.

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Estimates vary from 7 million to 75 million illiterate adults in the United States, depending on the breadth of the definition.

Some experts insist that in our increasingly technical, information-oriented age, those who cannot read at a 10th-grade level or above are functionally illiterate. But others say that is nonsense, that a fifth-grade reading level is sufficient.

Similarly, the impact of illiteracy is open to great debate. Jonathon Kozol, a Harvard University educator and author of "Illiterate America," defines literacy as being able to read at a 10th-grade level.

Kozol says tens of million Americans operate as "half citizens" in a world in which newspaper, leases, voting instructions and even the Bill of Rights are beyond their reading ability and that TV provides most of their information.

The cost in dollars each year, Kozol estimates, is $120 billion. That includes lost tax revenues, unemployment compensation, industrial accidents plus budgets for prisons, welfare, courts and law-enforcement agencies.

Though some experts argue that he is vastly overstating the problem, Kozol calls illiteracy "the one social issue of the 1980s that unites every (political) ideology from hard self-interest to the more compassionate."

In any case, millions of adults *can't* read and not only suffer from the fear of embarrassment and low self-esteem, but also miss out on their shot at the American Dream.

But a remarkable grass-roots literacy effort is under way nationwide and people like Fernando Serrano are benefiting. The push began in the past 18 months and is advancing on several levels:

- Many corporations are joining the campaign against illiteracy. Some contribute money to community efforts (for example, McDonald's Corp. in San Diego is offering its restaurants as meeting places for tutors and learners). While others have established their own in-house literacy programs, often with the help of labor unions.
- Communications companies, notably the ABC and PBS television networks, and newspapers, magazines and publishing houses, have allied to heighten public awareness about illiteracy and to actively recruit tutors and learners.

Newspapers, fearing an expanding population of non-readers, are not only examining the problem in their news columns but also are sponsoring local reading programs.

"We're trying to improve people's lives," said Helen K. Copley, publisher of *The San Diego Union* and *The Tribune* and chairman of the Copley Press.

"It's truly pathetic to hear the stories of people who've ordered hamburgers for 20 years because they couldn't read a menu or are frustrated to the point of tears because they can't read a simple sign," she said. "It would be wonderful if we could educate these people."

Working to educate them locally is the San Diego County Literacy Network — a coalition of organizations countywide that train reading tutors and match them with learners. The programs are free to learners and the tutors are all volunteers.

Of the seven programs in the network, two — Laubach Literacy Council of San Diego County and Literacy Volunteers of San Diego — offer reading instruction to adults with English as a second language. All of the programs offer one-on-one instruction.

Adults have many different motivations to finally learn to read, said Lynda Jones of the literacy network. Some wish to read to their young children; some want to be able to advance in their jobs; others want to be able to get a driver's license; some wish to read the Bible.

There have been dramatic success stories.

For example, the man who had become a hairdresser and passed the cosmetology exam by guessing at the multiple-choice questions, despite being illiterate.

He worked at a department store's hair parlor and hid his deficiency from the boss, who would have fired him instantly (imagine the liability potential for misunderstanding instructions for peroxide mixtures or hair dye). The hairdresser got along by getting a co-worker to read instructions or whatever else needed reading, Jones said.

"But she was blackmailing him. She insisted he take her to expensive restaurants or she would spill the beans to the boss," Jones said.

That was reason enough to enroll in a reading program. The hairdresser proved to be very bright and determined and in less than two years he had not only passed his driver's exam but also was devouring books on American history and Greek mythology. And he now operates his own business, to the astonishment of his former colleague.

Most learners are not so fortunate, however, Jones said. Many start the program, then take a hiatus for weeks or months to deal with some personal crisis, Jones said.

"It usually takes several years, even for those with a strong commitment, to learn to read at a functional level," Jones said. "Some go like wildfire, others just plug along.

"We have people who desperately want to learn, but many don't have the stability in their lives to stay with a program like this. We go for little victories — we may not always make a dramatic difference, but any positive change in a person's life is worthwhile."

Margaret Swingle, who has been a tutor for nearly three years, said the ability to read represents power and freedom.

"Johnnie was a young Marine who had grown up in the Arkansas hills and literally had never been to school," said Swingle, the mother of five grown sons. "He needed a high school diploma in order to re-enlist. But once he started learning to read, he realized he didn't have to settle for being a grunt in the military all his life. That's freedom. . . .

"It's so gratifying to see the light go on in someone's eyes. Some of our learners undergo something like a religious conversion and when they talk of how being able to finally read changed their lives, it's like they're testifying at a revival meeting," Swingle said.

The satisfaction may even be sweeter for tutors who guide learners whose native language is not English.

In an upstairs room in the First Presbyterian Church downtown, people from Indonesia, Turkey, Colombia, Mexico and China were paired off with tutors one recent weekday morning trying to master the problems presented by soft vowel sounds and silent consonants.

THE SAN DIEGO UNION
Sunday, October 18, 1987

‘Literacy net’ covers the county

In churches, storefronts and donated offices throughout San Diego County, volunteers worked in quiet isolation helping illiterate adults learn to read.

But about 18 months ago, things changed for these "literacy providers." The community-based groups decided to band together to form the San Diego County Literacy Network.

The organization stemmed from concern by Brian Bilbray, chairman of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, over the severity of the local illiteracy problem.

In organizing the San Diego Literacy Council, a coalition of leaders in business, industry, labor, churches, and the military, Bilbray sought the advice of the various literacy providers.

The providers, in turn, decided to form the network so they could better assist each other in recruiting tutors and adults who need help in learning to read.

The network is unique, said Jeff Stafford, who is Bilbray's point man on illiteracy. It is a model of cooperation compared to other urban centers, he said, where literacy providers sometimes tend to compete for recognition.

While the teaching methods and approaches of each program in San Diego County differ slightly, network-member programs share many characteristics:

- Adults who want to improve their reading and writing skills may enter any of these programs free of charge.
- Tutors are all volunteers trained in special workshops to teach remedial reading and writing.
- Tutors all work one-on-one or in small workshops with adult learners.
- Tutors and learners meet at varied hours and locations to accommodate each others' schedules.
- All programs provide materials to tutors and learners (some charge a modest fee for this, however).
- Two of the programs offer help for adults who need to learn to speak English as well as read and write it.

The literacy network is constantly looking for both tutors and learners. For information on how to get involved, call or write the program nearest you:

Carlsbad City Library Adult Learning Program, 1207 Elm Ave., Suite O, Carlsbad, 92008; 729-3690 or 729-6703. This program serves the Carlsbad and Oceanside areas.

Chula Vista Altrusa Literacy Team, 429 Third Ave., Chula Vista, 92010; 422-4145 (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday.) This program is for adults in the Chula Vista area.

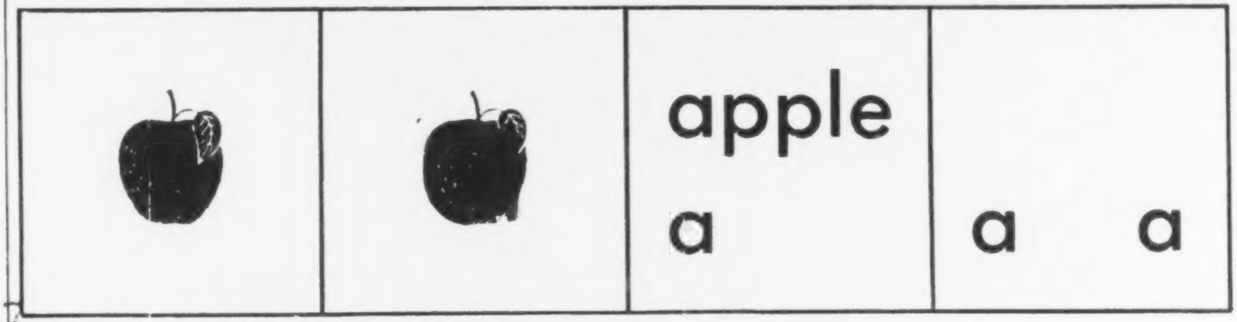
Laubach Literacy Council of San Diego County Inc., P.O. Box 341, Encinitas, 92104; 942-4945. This program, which serves communities countywide, serves any adult wishing to learn to read and adults whose second language is English.

Literacy Volunteers of America Inc., 2893 University Ave. San Diego, 92104; 692-9633. This program serves the city of San Diego.

National City Public Library's Project READ, 300 E. 15th St., National City, 92050; 474-2129 or 474-2142. This program serves National City, South Bay and parts of San Diego.

San Diego Community Colleges Continuing Education program, 5350 University Ave., 92105. The program, serving San Diego, serves any adult wishing to learn to read and those with English as a second language.

San Diego County Library Adult Literacy Services, 5555 Overland Ave., Building 15, San Diego, 92123; 565-3577. The program serves East County suburban communities, North County inland communities and Imperial Beach.



A writing aid from the 'Laubach Way to Reading.'

A number to call for helping hand

The people who need help most are unable to read the stories in this special report. How can they get help?

Some illiterates can read enough to learn about a literacy program from a flyer, said Lynda Jones, coordinator of the San Diego County Literacy Network, while others learn about it from a program or announcement on TV or radio.

"But most people hear about us from word of mouth," she said. "It usually takes encouragement from family members or friends, who know about the problem, before an illiterate person makes up his mind to get help."

If you know someone who needs help, contact the San Diego County Literacy Network.

The toll-free, general information number is **1-800-231-0959**

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How many? 7- to 75-million

By Mark Sauer
Staff Writer

Is America faced with an illiteracy *crisis*?

That is the focus of a major dispute since recent assessments by illiteracy experts vary widely on how many adult Americans cannot read.

The number of functionally illiterate adults — those who cannot read simple warnings and instructions, not to mention newspapers, magazines and books — varies from about 7 million to 75 million in the United States, depending on the breadth of the definition.

Extrapolating from the middle of that range, reading instructors in San Diego County estimate there are 350,000 functionally illiterate adults here.

The fundamental question is what is literacy? Is it being able to read at a fourth-grade, or eighth-grade, or 11th-grade level? Is an adult literate in the 1980s if he can read a brief sports story in the newspaper, or follow a simple food-section recipe, but cannot comprehend stories on the front page?

A government-financed survey last year of young adults found that 97 percent could read at a basic level — well enough to understand simple, specific material, such as a sports story. And 94 percent read at a fourth-grade level or above.

But 45 percent lacked the skills needed to read and comprehend complicated material and 20 percent scored below the average for eighth graders.

The Census Bureau concluded a few years ago that "virtually 100 percent of the general population" was literate. But it based its conclusions on written answers to questions on a printed form and people who did not return the form were eliminated from the sample.

Jeane Chall of Harvard University has estimated that 75 million to 85 million of the 180 million adult Americans are unable to read or write.

But David Harmon, a professor at Columbia University's Teacher's College who has studied illiteracy for 20 years, contends that, "there is very little empirical evidence" to justify the claim that America has a massive problem of adult illiteracy.

Instead, Harmon said, reading is no longer "highly valued as an activity" and the result is there are many adults who can read but don't, or have major deficiencies in comprehension and analytical skills.

Meanwhile, Harvard's Jonathon Kozol, a nationally recognized literacy expert and author of "Illiterate America," claims 60 million adult Americans can't read.

Kozol defines literacy as being able to read at the 10th-grade level. Moreover, he said America's switch from an industrial to information-based society means that the individual who reads at the fifth-grade level is no longer literate.

The former Rhodes Scholar and lifelong educator said that roughly one-third of American adults cannot read well enough to fully participate in society.

"How long can a democracy prevail when two-thirds of the population cannot speak to the other third, when it has to economically support the other third?" Kozol asks.

He decries the danger in a large mass of people being unable to comprehend political discourse, of "voting for a face instead of a body of ideas," of not being able to write to their congressmen.

There is agreement, however, that 50 percent of the country's prison inmates can't read newspaper headlines or understand written instructions. And last year, 40 percent of the armed services' enlistees were found to read below the eighth-grade level.

Those sounding the loudest warnings said that as America becomes more technologically advanced, the ability to read will become more precious.

Yet some scholars, who scoff at the alarmists and call their research shoddy and their numbers grossly exaggerated, insist that increased reading ability will be needed in only a small percentage of jobs.

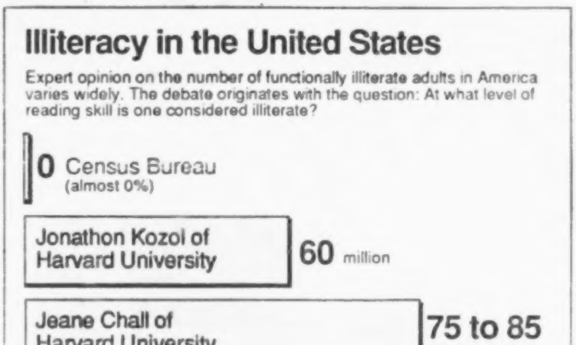
They argue that in the next 15 years (according to U.S. Department of Labor statistics) the greatest growth will be in retail, office and nursing jobs that do not require advanced reading skills.

Kozol and others, though, think it is time to put the "numbers game" aside and concentrate on helping illiterates. Clearly a large number of Americans — several million at least — cannot read. Those people must be helped, Kozol said.

Kozol calls illiteracy one of the "few solvable problems." But the solution will cost U.S. taxpayers $10 billion annually — a far cry from the $100 million now being spent on the government's Adult Basic Education program.

He also advocates the mobilization of scores of volunteer tutors to staff community remedial reading centers.

That, of course, is happening in San Diego and in many other towns across America.



Illiteracy in the United States

Expert opinion on the number of functionally illiterate adults in America varies widely. The debate originates with the question: At what level of reading skill is one considered illiterate?

SOURCE: The San Diego Union

(approximate figures)

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‘My life was a lie...’ but a big success

Teacher who couldn’t read now helps others

By Frank Green
Staff Writer

At 14, John Corcoran couldn’t recite the alphabet.

As an adult, he retreated in fear whenever his young son wanted him to read fairy tales, and feigned eyestrain when asked to order from a restaurant menu.

He always packed a book or newspaper, though — especially during his years as a public school teacher — so peers and students wouldn’t suspect his secret.

Corcoran was illiterate, a linguistic outcast in a world where reading and writing are second nature to most people.

Yet he was also a smashing success.

A graduate in education and business administration from a major university, Corcoran attended courses at three graduate schools, taught social studies for 18 years at four local high schools, and parlayed a $2,500 investment into a multimillion dollar land development business.

No amount of money or social standing, however, could erase the awful truth.

“My life was a lie, a fraud,” Corcoran said. “A day never went by that I didn’t worry about being exposed as a dummy.”

Now he wants everybody to read all about it — about his long nightmare, as well as his recent climb into the ranks of the literate.

“I want to be an example to other functional illiterates in our society who may be afraid to take the bold, frightening step towards learning to read and write,” he said the other day while seated at his desk in his spacious, two-story Oceanside home.

This despite the fact that he still harbors a measure of the fear he has carried for most of his life — the fear of drawing attention to himself, as well as the fear of admitting that he lacked the basic skills of most fifth graders.

“Really, it’s this inhibiting fear that kept me from getting help all these years,” he said.

Corcoran no longer runs from books, but joyously embraces them.

He is a prized pupil in the Carlsbad City Library Adult Learning Program, which specializes in helping adults who want to improve their reading and writing skills.

A tutor in the program has worked with him for more than a year, and Corcoran now spends up to 50 hours a week reading, and writing speeches, personal essays and letters to relatives and friends.

“It’s very therapeutic. I had all of these thoughts in my head all these years, but I couldn’t communicate them on paper. Now it’s all coming out,” he said.

Corcoran can trace the roots of his illiteracy to the very first day of first grade. Students were separated by the teacher into five rows of desks — row one for the brightest children to row five for the slowest learners.

“The criteria was reading and writing. I tried to read, then found myself dumped in row five,” Cor-

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coran said. "Every new school year it happened the same way."

Whenever he was called upon by the teacher to read aloud, he feigned illness or simply refused.

"I did anything to avoid humiliation," he said. "The frustration I felt triggered a chain reaction of many other feelings — anger, resentment, rebellion and defiance."

Corcoran's life outside school was also less than stable.

His family was poor. His father was a teacher, working in small towns in New Mexico and Texas, taking jobs wherever he could find them.

"We lived in 25 different neighborhoods, and I went to 17 different schools, in 12 years," he said.

Corcoran stressed that his parents doted on their children, although they rarely read to them. "It was the oral tradition that they cultivated," he said.

Despite his great handicap, Corcoran excelled in such subjects as mathematics, social studies and physical education — areas where his illiteracy was not so obvious.

In fact, he graduated from high school with a C-plus grade average.

He successfully attended Palo Verde Junior College and Riverside Junior College for nearly two years before transferring to the University of Texas at El Paso, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in education.

Part of the general education requirements for graduation included dreaded English courses.

"Each semester, I'd register in the classes, then have to drop them because I couldn't cut it," he said.

He ultimately completed the requirements, but with the help of friends who would read him assignments and write his essays for him.

"I used every means at my disposal to survive, including dishonesty," he said. "I cheated a lot."

Upon graduation, Corcoran studied for his teaching credential for two summers at San Diego State University.

He subsequently landed a job at Oceanside High School, where he taught bookkeeping, typing and social studies. For 18 years, he worked at four high schools in the North County, compiling glowing reports from his supervisors.

"I never assigned essays or writing tests. I graded students by their success in oral exams," he said.

By then, Corcoran was adept at picking basic one or two syllable words out of newspaper and magazine articles.

"I would watch the television news the night before, then scan the paper the next morning for the words I understood to supplement my knowledge."

During those years, Corcoran lived in terror of being unmasked.

"I always carried a newspaper or a book in my back pocket so that nobody would guess," he said. "Of course, I couldn't read the first paragraph of the first chapter of even a children's book."

But when a shrewd investment in North County real estate in the mid-1970s turned his personal holdings into a gold mine, Corcoran quit his teaching job and turned his energies to developing apartments, condominiums and detached homes.

"It's a very competitive business, but I was good at it. I could think in the abstract. I successfully went head-to-head with the best people in the business," he said, adding that he insulated himself with a large staff of advisers and secretaries.

A downturn in the building industry in the early- and mid-1980s, however, forced him to re-evaluate his business and himself.

"Sagging revenues meant laying off members of my staff. I suddenly found myself having to do much of the written work," he said.

One short letter to a business associate, for instance, might take him a day to get down on paper.

Disgusted with himself, and tired of running from his problem, Corcoran enrolled last September in reading and writing classes at the Adult Learning Program in Carlsbad.

"My visit was spontaneous," he said. "I didn't make an appointment, and even when I got there, I couldn't bring myself to tell the receptionist that I had a reading problem."

Today, Corcoran can open a book and casually recite the words with the authority of a professional narrator.

He wakes up early, sometimes at 3 or 4 a.m., to read and write. He is contemplating writing a book about his experiences — how it feels to be a functional illiterate, and the extent, causes and solutions to illiteracy in America.

"For one thing, we have to re-evaluate the educational system," he said. "We have to make sure that children who, for whatever reason, have an aversion to reading and writing in their early years are given special attention by their parents and teachers. This is very important because studies show time and again that if youngsters don't learn the basic skills by the fourth grade, it's unlikely that they ever will."

Corcoran hopes the publicity generated by his story will generate action — in the business and educational communities, and in functional illiterates themselves to seek help.

"In our society, in which basic education is mandatory for success in life, a poor reader soon learns that he or she is a second-class citizen," he said. "And that's a terrible, desperate position to be trapped in."

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'There are always kids who fall through the cracks'

In high school they still can't read... and soon drop out

By A. Dahleen Glanton
Staff Writer

During a remedial reading class at San Diego High School, a teacher asked her 10th and 11th grade students to define the word "anarchy." The room suddenly grew quiet — not one of them knew the answer.

Moving to the next word on the vocabulary worksheet, the students were asked to explain what a "sense" is. The only answer — barely audible and incorrect — was "like an odor from a flower."

These were students who have made it to high school and have reading skills that are at a second- to sixth-grade level. Some of them were immigrants still learning the language. Others were native English speakers who somehow had failed to learn the basic skills.

They stand a chance of dropping out of school in the next few years and becoming statistics in the country's large number of illiterate adults.

"When I think about illiteracy, I think of a person who has gone to the third or maybe sixth level and still can't do those lower level tests. That person can talk with you about something he or she knows, but they can't necessarily write a decent paragraph about it," said Jesse Perry, program manager for English language arts for the San Diego Unified School District.

"There are always kids who fall through the cracks. It may not be because of their inability to learn, but because of some extenuating circumstances."

The problem is not unique to San Diego High School. Similar students can be found in just about any high school and junior high school

Forty-nine percent of the ninth graders tested in the San Diego Unified School District last spring had below-average reading skills, according to Bob Raines, a program evaluator for the district. For 11th graders tested last fall, 46.5 percent fell below the national average. Both percentages are based on the national norm of 50 percent.

Some observers blame the school system, while others say the curriculum, the parents and students themselves are at fault. Most officials, however, agreed there must be a combined effort by all in order to combat the problem.

"Our job is to make sure that young people who go through 13 years of school and earn a high school diploma are grounded in the basic skills," said Tom Payzant, superintendent of city schools. "There is no question about that being the primary mission of the schools. And to the extent that we don't do that, we're not fulfilling our responsibility."

Some officials said the problem stems from a change in attitude over the past 20 years — a shift that no longer made reading a premium.

"When I was a child, there was a feeling on the part of everyone in the school that every child must learn to read, not just learn to read the basics at the second and third grade levels, but the basics at the eighth grade level. If you get that eighth-grade level, you have a chance for success in reading," said city school board member Dorothy Smith.

"There are so many excuses offered for not teaching every child to read. What happened in the schools was that, although the general, primary purpose was to ensure they taught every child to read, at the same time there were certain things that began to happen in the system that showed that literacy for every student was no longer a goal. That seemed to be an unwritten policy."

If a student can't read well, it can mean he or she is performing poorly in other subjects, officials said. In elementary school, reading skill largely determines whether a student will be promoted to the next grade.

However, that has not always been the case. San Diego, like other districts throughout the country, have had lax guidelines for promoting and flunking students. Students were either passed on without grasping the basic skills or they were held back without receiving enough extra help.

"Schools don't want to keep a child back," said Angela Dunmore, a former teacher and now director of Project My Turn, a student tutorial program. "That's an understood, unwritten policy for some schools and the people who want that policy are the parents. The majority of parents don't want their child kept back and it becomes very political."

The San Diego district adopted a new promotion and retention policy in 1985 that requires teachers to identify "at-risk" students within the first nine weeks of the school term, give them special attention and notify the parents.

"The main thrust of that policy is to encourage teachers to make sure students have met minimum levels of progress or achievement before they are promoted," said Kermeen Fristrom, director of basic education for city schools. "Before that policy, there probably was a great deal more encouragement to just move youngsters along year by year regardless of achievement."

Merely retaining students at a grade level doesn't help, officials said. Students will do just as well academically — and even better socially — if they are promoted. They said the key is to make sure students receive special instruction if they are held back.

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"I am an advocate of having standards for promotion," Payzant said. "Where we kid ourselves is thinking we can retain children and simply put them through the same program the second time and satisfy ourselves that that will take care of things. If a child goes through the first time and it doesn't take, then you have to come up with a different approach the second time around in order to make it better. That can be hard to do."

The estimated dropout rate for city high schools, based on 1985-86 data, is 36.7 percent. That means for a class of 1,000 ninth graders, 367 will drop out prior to completing high school — many of them because of frustration over their poor academic performance.

"We've found that dropouts are people who may be over age for their grade level and they likely will be retarded in their achievement by at least two grade levels," said John Griffith, director of research for the city school district. "That certainly goes hand in hand with the dropout rate."

There are many reasons why some students who remain in high school are poor readers. Perhaps the family moved a lot and the child missed important portions of the reading instruction, such has phonics, vocabulary or reading comprehension. There could be physical handicaps, such as dyslexia or neurological problems. And there can be social reasons.

Since very little reading aloud is done in high school, students having problems may not be easily identified, Dunmore said.

"They find excellent ways of covering it up. I had a student who every time I would ask something, the kid would have to leave the room or would act up and have to go to the principal. They become the class clown."

Basic reading is taught in kindergarten through sixth grade in city schools, using a Houghton-Mifflin series. Special reading courses are offered for seventh graders who are at least two years behind in reading. Other remedial courses are provided for high school students who still have not developed basic skills.

Some officials, however, said emphasis on remedial reading is a reverse approach, and they advocate focusing more attention on reading development in the earlier years of school.

Data show that 98 percent of the students entering kindergarten and first grade in city schools start out reading at grade level. A steep plunge occurs by the end of the first grade, and some students end up below grade level. By the time they enter second grade, 56 percent are reading below grade level.

The numbers are even more devastating for some minority groups. Seventy-three percent of the Hispanics and 67 percent of the blacks read below grade level in the second grade, according to a school district report.

"The K-3 grades are really the foundational grades for teaching of language arts, meaning reading, writing and speaking," said Perry.

Because of budget constraints, the city school board this year was forced to eliminate the Miller-Unruh Reading Program, in which specialists identified elementary students with reading problems and provided special instruction.

The district compensated by adding $650,000 to hire teachers to help elementary students who are having trouble in all basic skills, including reading.

Some students come into the school system at a disadvantage, and unless special steps are taken, they never overcome it, Dunmore said.

"They have never been read to in their lives. It's very difficult to put that type of child in the classroom with children who have had all of those things and expect them to learn at the same rate. They are not going to. You have to go back and provide the basics for them."

Smith has been critical of the school district's reading format, in which students in the classroom are divided into three groups depending on their level of ability. The system, she said, has been detrimental for students placed in the lower groups.

"So to improve literacy, we must look at methods of speeding up the progress of students in the lower groups so they do end up at grade level," said Smith. "That may mean providing extra support. But if we start off with the attitude that if a student is in the low group, they are going to end up at below grade level, that will be a self-fulfilling prophecy."

But according to Fristrom, the groups allow teachers to better manage their classes. Classrooms usually include about 30 students.

"What the teacher can do is focus on those 10 kids in the reading circle and work with those youngsters more intensely. There is a certain amount of research that shows grouping like this is more effective than the whole class being involved. And there's a little research on the other side. If we knew the exact answer, things would be a lot easier. But we really don't," he said.

There is also a controversy over the procedure for teaching reading. Some officials believe in teaching the phonics and vocabulary before books are introduced in the classroom.

Smith, who introduced the district's policy requiring each student to read a book a month, disagrees with that method.

"Many teachers have told me they don't have time for much reading, they just have time for the worksheets. That's a tragedy," she said.

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Motivation is key for teen non-readers

By A. Dahleen Glanton
Staff Writer

One of Vincent Gallegos' greatest fears in high school was that he would be called on to read aloud in class. It was one of the reasons he decided to drop out of school.

Gallegos, 17, had made it to the 10th grade at Madison High School, but his reading skills were far below his grade level. He was also lagging behind in other basic skills.

"I get embarrassed when I go up in front of a group to read. It's just like I forget everything. I just sit there and stutter. Other than that, I ain't got no problems," Gallegos said.

"If the teacher called on me to read, I would tell him I just didn't want to read. Then that would go bad on my grade because I wasn't participating in class."

The result, Gallegos said, was that he flunked every class except physical education.

"I just got bored," he said. "After a while, just sitting there reading and reading and reading got boring. I just never went to my history class because of the history book . . . I had problems understanding it."

Gallegos, who is enrolled in a high school completion program at the Educational Cultural Complex, a center for continuing education in Southeast San Diego, said he would like to become a firefighter, but he fears his reading problem will hinder him.

"I haven't had any problems finding a job because I have a problem reading, but because I didn't have a high school diploma or GED. That's the only thing that's stopping me," he said.

"Most definitely it might hurt later on. You have to be able to read for almost any job you get. In a government job like (firefighting), where you're serving people, they are going to ask for a high school diploma or GED and you have to read all those medical books and stuff. If you can't read or you ain't that smart, well they're just going to throw your application away."

Seventeen-year-old Kerry Paddock sometimes has problems reading magazines and long newspaper articles. But she doesn't consider herself illiterate.

"I just have problems understanding what the words mean," she said.

One year before she was to graduate from Morse High School, Paddock dropped out, mostly out of frustration over her grades. She enrolled in the high school completion program at the Educational Cultural Complex and expects to graduate in June.

"I was making D's and F's. I didn't understand history or American (literature) and I was kicked out of (high) school because I was getting bad grades. It was just too hard. It was a lot harder because I was having problems reading," she said.

Paddock said she might run into problems later on because of her poor reading skills, but so far, it hasn't caused many problems.

"When you go out to look for a job, it doesn't get in the way. Nobody ever looks at anything like that. They just want to know what grade you're in and what's your age. What your grade-point average is, they don't really care about that. They want to know if you have a car and you if you can be on time and if you will call in when you can't come."

Paddock admits she hasn't given much thought to what she will do in the future. She said she might like to go to college and become a fashion designer.

"If I can get my grades up in the next two years and they let me in, then I will make it," she said.

In his five years as a reading instructor in the continuing education program at the Educational Cultural Complex, Gary Gleckman has seen hundreds of teen-agers like Paddock and Gallegos. But the reasons that brought them there are all different.

"My philosophy is that one's ability to read is a product of a number of factors. It could be physical . . . it could be psychological. You don't feel you're capable because someone has put you down and you go through life saying 'I can't.' To me, motivation is the number one issue," he said.

"If you come from a family or you are in a group where nobody reads and you are put down if you read, you're not going to do it. When I get my students who are ages 16 to 80, it could be any one of a combination of those things that created that problem."

Gleckman estimated that up to 95 percent of the students in the reading program at ECC have dropped out of school at some point. About 20 percent speak another language, but have difficulty reading or writing in their own language.

"Eventually what happens is you get frustrated. And when you fail, nobody wants to go to school and have everybody laugh at you and put down, so you drop out. You give up and you never get those skills," he said.

In the San Diego Unified School District, the estimated high school dropout rate, based on 1985-86 data, is 36.7 percent. That means for a class of 1,000 ninth-graders, 367 will drop out prior to completing high school, many of them because of poor grades.

For some minority groups, the numbers are even more devastating. About 47 percent of the Hispanics will drop out, 41 percent of the blacks, 30 percent of the Asians and 28 percent of the Filipinos. The dropout rate for white students is about 34 percent.

"The areas where there's the highest percentage of dropouts is in the minority communities," said Lemmon Williams, director of Project Success, a community-based dropout-prevention program. "At Morse, Lincoln and San Diego high schools, we're talking about 50 percent."

Project Success is currently providing tutors for seventh-, eigth- and ninth-graders at Memorial Junior High School, which is predominately Hispanic, and Keiller Middle School, which is mostly black, Williams said.

Many of the students are one or two years behind their peers in basic skills and they have developed disciplinary problems, he said.

"When they go home, they get no support there," Williams said. "The kid stays away from school and the parent doesn't even know it. He's disruptive in class and they send him home rather than dealing with the problem. So the kid gets shuffled out and develops a pattern of losing. And once you develop a pattern for losing, you think that's all you can do in life."

The cycle between illiteracy and dropout rate is not easily broken, Williams said.

"In many instances, the parents themselves have dropped out of school and when the kids bring home their schoolwork, the parents can't even assist with it. If the parent doesn't think education is important, he's not going to motivate his child to get an education."

In a way, Paddock and Gallegos are the lucky ones. They decided to enroll in a course to improve their skills.

"There are millions of people out there who are hiding out. The ones here are the ones who had the courage to come for help," Gleckman said.

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- "The Literacy Challenge," in which the Gannett Foundation invites local literacy agencies to compete for $2.25 million in grants over two years with proposals to expand literacy efforts.

In San Diego, Brian Bilbray, chairman of the county Board of Supervisors, is spearheading an effort to make community leaders aware of the illiteracy problem.

Bilbray and Copley co-chair the San Diego Literacy Council, a coalition of leaders in business, industry, labor, churches, and the military. On Friday, a breakfast hosted by the council and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, to which the county's top chief executive officers were invited, served to outline the extent of the problem and suggest ways in which various organizations can become involved.

In addition to funding community literacy programs, many companies of varying size have begun in-house programs to teach employees to read.

For example, the 1984 contract between the United Auto Workers and General Motors called for $200 million per year to fund basic-skills programs — especially reading — while $120 million was made available at Ford Motor Co.

Dozens of companies, such as Polaroid, Prudential, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Reynolds Tobacco, have turned themselves into educators of last resort.

Illiteracy costs business billions of dollars per year in low productivity, workplace accidents, lost management and supervisory time, poor product quality and absenteeism, according to the Business Council for Effective Literacy (BCEL).

The council also estimates that three-quarters of unemployed people in America are seriously deficient in reading and other basic skills.

Victim is now a leader

By Frank Green
Staff Writer

When Brian Bilbray looked at his grade school primers it was as if he were staring into a bowl of alphabet soup.

Words and letters registered in his mind like jumbled masses of type: q's looked like p's, b's like d's, m's like n's, and vice versa. Simple monosyllabic words were unfathomable.

His teachers, suspecting he suffered from eye trouble, would seat him at the front of the class. Still, the problem persisted.

Bilbray was a victim of dyslexia, an impairment of the ability to read.

He eventually overcame his problem, turning into a voracious reader during his teen years.

The difficulties he endured, however, served to sensitize him to the troubles faced by the many illiterate people in American society.

"I've always felt that one of our priorities should be to stamp out illiteracy, which is taking a terrible toll on our society," said Bilbray, now the chairman of the county Board of Supervisors and a leader in developing the network of literacy programs in the county.

Bilbray, 36, is a founder and co-chairman of the San Diego Council on Literacy, which has brought together literary service agencies in an effort to more effectively reach people with reading and writing problems.

Bilbray discovered that one-third of those parents who collect welfare are illiterate, and that two-thirds of the prison population never finished high school and suffer critical reading and writing difficulties.

Additionally, one-fourth of the adults in the country "can't function in the written world."

"Illiteracy is at the root of chronic unemployment. People who can't even fill out employment applications aren't going to be able to land good jobs," said Bilbray.

The attack on illiteracy spearheaded by Bilbray's organization includes a campaign to publicize the issue and its urgent nature, to encourage people with reading and writing disabilities to seek help, and to recruit a large stable of tutors from the business sector.

The council is attempting to raise $500,000, which it needs to successfully implement all of its programs. About $100,000 has been raised to date, including a $50,000 grant from Helen K. Copley, publisher of *The San Diego Union* and *The Tribune*, and Bilbray's co-chairman on the council.

"We want to impress on people, especially business leaders, that we can't ignore this problem any longer, that we're beyond giving this issue just lip service," Bilbray said.

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'It's like you're your own prisoner'

Sally, a divorced mother of three, is a 46-year-old San Diego health-care worker who previously ran a small business here for 15 years. She cannot read. Sally is determined to learn, though, and is working with a tutor from San Diego County Library Adult Literacy Services.

With simple eloquence, Sally told Currents *writer Mark Sauer her story of trying to live without the written word. Someday she hopes to be able to put her thoughts into written words.*

For years I got along not being able to read by memorizing things I needed to know and by bluffing. Often I thought of getting help and learning how to read. But I figured I got by this long, I could keep going.

Then it seemed to hit me all at once within a few days. First, I got called down for jury duty. I had never been involved in anything like a trial before and I knew I couldn't handle it — what if there was a lot of written evidence? How could I sit in judgment not being able to read and understand it?

I got out of that .... But then my daughter was diagnosed with cancer. She needed surgery and I wanted to give blood for her. I went to the blood-drive trailer at work and there were reams of paper to fill out.

I gave my standard excuse: "I don't have my glasses and so I can't read this." But then someone offered me her glasses so I could fill out the form. I was so embarrassed, the sweat was just pouring off me — you can't imagine how terrifying it is to think someone is going to figure out that you can't read.

I looked over the forms, pretending to read them. Finally, I said, "I'm sorry, but your glasses aren't working. Would you mind filling these out for me?"

That's why people like me stay home and are scared to get involved in anything — the whole world knows how to read and you don't. It's like you're your own prisoner.

Then I was in a training class at work. They paired us up with people we didn't know and we had to write a skit and perform it in class. I did OK with that — I helped create the skit, but I told my partner to write it down: "Your handwriting is much better than mine," I said.

But then we had to write our impressions of various things on a long questionnaire. I scribbled for a bit, wrote down every word I knew on that form. Then I folded it up and put it in my purse; just didn't turn it in.

After those three things happened, I made up my mind to learn to read.

Illiterate people have to train their memories because we can never rely on being able to read instructions. If I go downtown for something, I have to remember every building or landmark at every turn, because if I get lost, what am I going to do?

If I need things at the grocery store, I remember how many items I need and when I go to the checkout stand, I count what I have in the basket.

My children and one or two friends know about my problem and they help me out. Thank God, my doctor knows about me. If I need medicine, he makes sure I understand and remember the number of pills to take and the time to take them because I can't read the label.

They figured I had a problem in third grade. They tested me and realized I wasn't keeping up. So they put me in a class for the handicapped, kids who had cerebral palsey, kids who were mentally retarded — you name it. Through my school years I was marked as that kind of person.

In ninth grade, I went to Grossmont High School and I didn't know how to read or write. I dropped out.

My parents always gave me the feeling that there was something terribly wrong with me. It really bugged my mother that I couldn't read. Just before she died, she told my sister, "Take care of Sally." Here I was doing much better than her, but there is such a stigma attached to not being able to read that even my own mother couldn't handle it.

Carol has been tutoring me since July and I was in Project READ (a literacy program) for a year before that. At times I get depressed and feel like quitting.

I'm making progress. I feel more and more like picking up something and trying to read it. I try to read my mail now. One of these days when I'm better at it, I'll put out the money and start getting the newspaper. I've never read a newspaper story.

I've never voted. Even if I could figure out the names of the candidates, I could never read the propositions. And it wouldn't be fair anyway since I've never read a word about any politician's views.

I just want to be able to pick up a book and read. I want to be able to stretch out on the couch on a Saturday afternoon and read a good love story, a true one.

But now my goal is much simpler. I love my brother, we're very close. He's never treated me differently because I couldn't read, and since I've been trying to learn he has been my biggest supporter. My kids all accepted it and would come over to read me my mail, but my brother is the one who is truly excited that I'm learning how to read.

He said to me, "If you can write me a letter one of these days, I'd be thrilled. I'll know you're really doing great."

So I'm going to write him a long letter and tell him how much he means to me. And I'm going to send it to him at Christmas.

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

S.D. tutors do more than teach

"A tutor deals not only with teaching phonetics and spelling," Lynda Jones said, "but also with overcoming barriers in a person's life."

Jones, coordinator of the San Diego County Literacy Network, said helping someone learn to read means first overcoming the embarrassment, hopelessness and low self-esteem common among illiterates.

"We had one woman who needed an operation, but Medicare wouldn't pay for it because it wasn't deemed to be life-threatening," Jones said. "There was no way an illiterate woman could wade through the red tape and do battle with the system.

"So her tutor spent six months or more filling out forms and working on her behalf and was finally successful. Now, maybe that's not literacy. But without the operation, the learner would have dropped out of the program and never learned to read. We're all advocates here, we do whatever we can to help people learn to read."

About 2,000 adults are being taught to read by about 1,500 tutors in San Diego County, Jones said. Of the "learners," about 50 percent are in ESL — English as a second language — programs.

Each of the seven programs within the network has its own way of doing things. But generally, those who wish to be tutors are given a frank orientation on what they can expect in teaching adults to read, Jones said.

Then there are several hours of training spread over a few weeks, before the new tutor is matched with a learner, she said.

National City Public Library's Project READ, for example, offers 24 hours of instruction.

Some tutors work several days a week with several learners, others just one or two days with one learner, depending on the extent of commitment by both tutor and learner. Project READ asks its tutors to work with a learner around three hours a week for at least six months.

"It's remarkable what can be done with some of these English-as-a-second-language people," said Inez Diedrich, who has been helping adults learn to read for 19 years. She told of an elderly Mexican woman whose grandchildren inspired her.

"They would come home and correct her: 'It's beans, Grandma, not *frijoles*. That's when she made up her mind to learn to speak and read English," Diedrich said.

"We help people learn to communicate if they are working in a private home, in a hotel, restaurant or other service-industry job," said Helen Tobias, who runs the Laubach Program at the church.

"When you can't read, so many options are closed to you."

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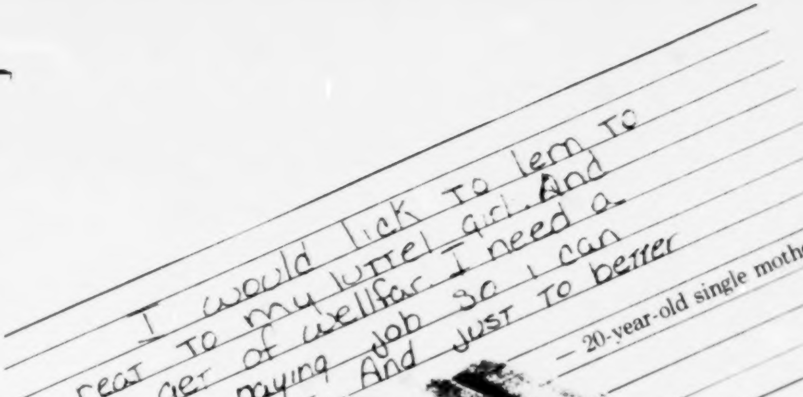


I would lick to lern to
reat to my luttel girl. And
to get of wellfar. I need a
good paying job so I can
Suport her. And just to better
my Self.

— 20-year-old single mother

The handwriting is the real thing

The handwritten messages on the cover and atop the inside pages of this special section are the actual responses from illiterate adults to the question, "Why do you want to learn to read?" The adults are all learners in the Carlsbad City Library Adult Learning Program. The writing is original; the hands holding the pens in these "photo-illustrations" belong to *Currents* staff members.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jonathon Kozol, a Harvard University educator, estimates that illiteracy costs the United States $120 billion every year. That includes lost taxes, unemployment compensation and industrial accidents plus budgets for prisons, welfare, courts and police.

DID YOU KNOW?

In San Diego County, about 2,000 illiterate adults are being helped by some 1,500 tutors in the seven programs that make up the newly formed San Diego County Literacy Network.

Newspapers, TV took lead in grass-roots effort

Dozens of firms also have given millions in fight

By Mark Sauer
Staff Writer

It is fitting that when American business and industry began realizing the country had a serious illiteracy problem, newspapers and other media companies led the push to do something about it.

In 1985, the *El Paso Herald-Post*, through the personal commitment of its editor, Jay Ambrose, focused the attention of newspaper publishers on the danger illiteracy posed.

Through an ambitious series of stories, Ambrose and *Herald-Post* reporters and editors placed the problem of a spreading stain of illiteracy before the citizens of El Paso.

The paper's staff followed up by helping local literacy programs coordinate their efforts, by starting new programs and by encouraging other local companies and public agencies to do the same in a booklet produced during El Paso's "Year of the Printed Word" literacy project.

Soon newspapers across the country, including *The San Diego Union*, were getting involved in promoting the grass-roots effort to reach and help non-readers.

Helen K. Copley, publisher of *The San Diego Union* and *The Tribune* and chairman of the Copley Press, was head of the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation when it introduced its literacy program in the summer of 1986.

"Our company's commitment is to help people in a personal way," Copley said. "And to allow everyone an opportunity to become vitally involved in their communities and in our democratic way of life by being able to read."

Called "Press to Read," the ANPA's campaign supports the efforts of public and private literacy programs.

For example, Copley donated a grant earlier this year of $50,000 to the San Diego Council on Literacy, which also benefited from a $30,000 grant underwritten by a partnership of the federal ACTION agency, the Gannett Foundation and the Dayton-Hudson Foundation.

Those grants, plus a $600,000 grant from the state library to help fund the San Diego Library's literacy program for the next five years, are examples of how private companies and public agencies are joining to combat illiteracy.

Other notable efforts include:

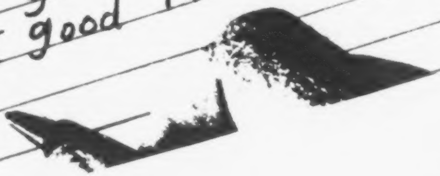
- An alliance between ABC and PBS in which several news documentaries and a made-for-TV movie focusing on illiteracy in America have been aired to heighten public awareness of the problem.
- The innovative "Time to Read" program by Time Inc. that uses magazines as reading texts and volunteers as tutors in community-based literacy programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Dozens of companies have become educators by providing remedial reading courses. The 1984 contract between the United Auto Workers and General Motors called for $200 million per year to fund basic-skills programs — especially reading.

I WOOd LiKe TO LeARN TO ReAd BeTTeR AND RPgHT BeTTeR So I coud geT A Good JOB ANd To Be AS good AS every Body elys IT'S NOT good TO WOT NO How TO ReAd OR WRPTE

— 25-year-old father of three



THE SAN DIEGO UNION
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The tragedy of 3.1 million in state barely able to read

ILLITERACY'S

CYCLE OF DESPAIR

FIRST OF THREE PARTS

By Deb Kollars
Bee Staff Writer

One of every six adults in California can barely read.

They cannot make sense of a bus schedule or poison warnings on household cleansers. They can't figure out a 10 percent tip. They can't read the newspaper or a favorite Bible passage.

They number 3.1 million and most will spend their entire lives hiding their illiteracy.

Their ranks will remain strong as long as California schools keep turning out students who can barely read and write. According to an in-depth study by The Bee based on test results and educational research, public schools in this state are failing to educate as many as one out of three students.

These teenagers leave school with appallingly low skills, then find themselves plunged into a changing economy that is placing an increasing premium on high levels of education. Many can't get jobs. Some turn to crime. They have children.

The devastating cycle of illiteracy goes on and the price for it is high.

California spends more than $6 billion a year on its welfare system. More than 50 percent of all welfare clients, according to a recent state survey, couldn't read or write well enough to be trained for a job.

California spends more than $4,000 per student a year to educate the 4.4 million children in public schools, yet hundreds of thousands are dropping out or graduating with serious literacy problems.

Undereducation is not new to this state and country.

We have always had large numbers of people who were poorly schooled. In days past, however, many found jobs in agriculture or as unskilled laborers or factory workers.

It is different now.

Plants are closing. Jobs requiring low skills are disappearing. A high-tech, service-oriented economy has arrived and people who don't have a full command of the English language, who can't read and write and compute at sophisticated levels are finding themselves unemployed or working for minimum wage.

According to a new and exhaustive report on adult illiteracy, obtained by The Bee and about to be released by the state Department of Education, 3.1 million California adults read below the fourth-grade level and are considered illiterate. National figures show another 3.3 million adults in this state read between the fifth- and eighth-grade levels and are considered marginally literate.

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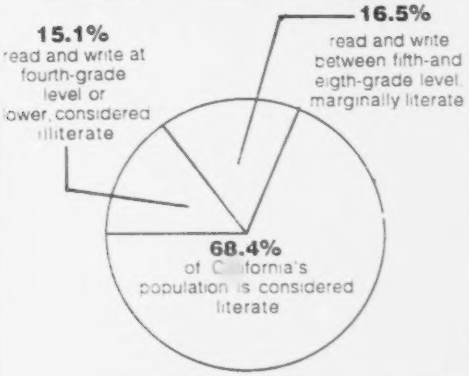
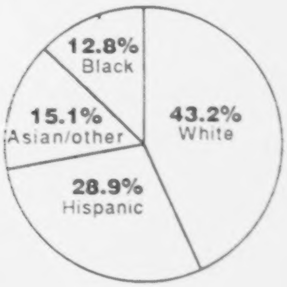
Who are the illiterate?

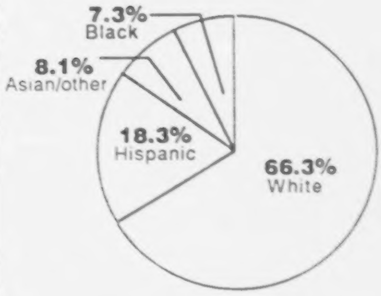
California's illiterate adults



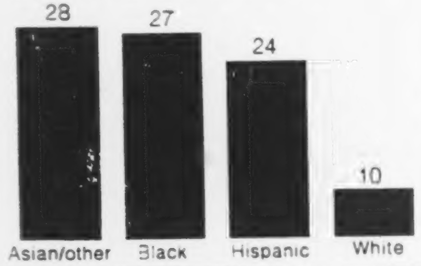
Illiteracy by ethnic group



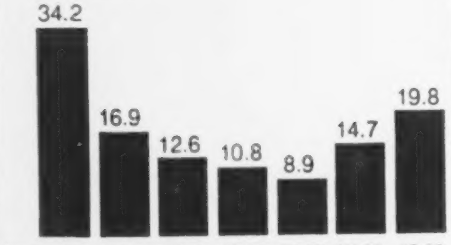
State ethnic breakdown



Rates of illiteracy
(by percentage within ethnic group)



Illiteracy by age
(in percent)



Source: California Department of Education and U.S. Department of Education

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For these people, who make up more than 30 percent of California's adult population, the individual costs of having literacy problems are immeasurable.

For Enrique Ramirez, 29, of San Bruno, being a non-reader has brought pain and embarrassment. It has meant working at a janitorial supply company and not being able to read what is in the containers. It has meant going without Campbell's soups because the labels don't carry pictures. It has meant not sending a birthday card because he might choose a sympathy card by mistake. It has meant sometimes hurting those he loves.

"My little son is named Enrique like me. He's 4 years old and we call him 'Scooby,'" he said. "He would always ask me to read him a book. And I would have to tell him I don't have time and just push him away and act grouchy."

A series of deceptions

For Gene Garibay of San Diego, life has been a series of deceptions. An honor student in high school, he could not read beyond a third-grade level. He guessed on true-false questions, memorized essays word for word, cheated when he had to.

Garibay, 50, spent two years in college where he became adept at listening and memorizing every word he heard in class. When he needed a telephone number, he turned to the yellow pages and went by the pictures. In restaurants, he always ordered a club sandwich. He relied often on a 600-page handmade picture dictionary to figure out words.

Over the years, Garibay, 50, has held 22 jobs. His income as a government consultant topped $85,000 one year. In that position, he evaluated books for the state Department of Education by asking questions of fellow workers until he felt he knew what he was reviewing.

His bosses, his co-workers, his friends, his wife never knew he could not read.

"I didn't like jumping around from job to job," Garibay said. "But whenever it came time to start writing memos or sending letters, it would be time for me to move on."

‘If you can't read, you get left out of a lot of things. It's like life sort of passes you by. It hurts a lot.’

— **Enrique Ramirez**

For non-readers, getting a job is becoming harder and harder these days. In California, state Employment Development Department figures show that between 1972 and 1984, the number of jobs grew from fewer than 8 million to more than 10 million. During that same time, however, 173,000 jobs in basic industries such as auto making, lumber production, steel and food processing were scrapped.

Ara Montgomery, a strong-willed single mother of five, is on welfare for the first time in her life because she can't find a job. A high school dropout, she has worked for years as a butcher and a forklift driver. The jobs have not required high levels of literacy. They have called for long hours of hard work and she has given them gladly, with pride.

Last spring Montgomery, 38, was laid off her job as a freezer builder in Minnesota. She brought her family to Sacramento because she heard there were butchering jobs here. She has yet to find one. It hurts.

"I feel like I'm behind this wall and I can't get out," she said, anger and despair in her voice. "You look at all these other people and things are going so smoothly for them. They have nice jobs and nice cars and they shop at Macy's for their kids' clothes. And I ask myself what's the difference? I'll tell you what it is. They have an education."

According to business leaders, companies can't afford to hire people with low skills because of training costs and mistakes on the job. And as jobs require increasing levels of education, managers are complaining that it is getting harder and harder to find qualified people.

Last year, for example, 50 percent of the 3,000 applicants at Southern California Gas Co. could not pass a series of math, reading and vocabulary tests based on elementary and high school skills.

From now until the end of the century, the number of new young workers will shrink, although the number of women and minorities — traditionally the most poorly educated groups — will increase.

"We in business are extremely concerned," said Joseph F. Alibrandi, chairman of Whittaker Corp. in Los Angeles and head of the California Economic Roundtable's education task force. "Our ability to compete rests on the quality of materials and the quality of our people. In the final analysis, it's the people who make the difference."

Throughout the state and nation, politicians and business people have joined in highly publicized campaigns to salvage an economy they fear is threatened by illiteracy. National estimates show California businesses spend about $30 million a year to teach workers reading, writing and math skills they should have learned in school. But although speeches and pamphlets allude to the high price of having non-readers in the workplace, examples are hard to come by.

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Representatives of several major employers in California said illiteracy is not a problem for them now but may be in the future.

Larry Cox, news representative for General Telephone Co. of California, said his firm does not hire people with poor reading and language abilities.

"The thinking is they better be literate when they come here," said Cox, whose company received 45,000 job applications from people seeking work last year. "With those kinds of numbers, we can afford to pick the cream of the crop."

Tom Smith, plant manager for Pacific Rice Products in Woodland, tells a different story.

About a year ago, a longtime supervisor cost the company $2,000 one night because he could not read a memo saying the size of the crisped rice was to be increased for a certain customer.

"When other companies say they don't have illiterates in the workplace, I don't believe it," he said. "It's the kind of thing most people don't like to talk about."

Trisha Stanionis, a board member of the Private Industry Council in Sacramento and Holiday Inn general manager, agreed. "I honestly believe you could call someone a child molester and not embarrass them as much as if you called them illiterate."

Gene Garibay avoided such embarrassment by camouflaging his illiteracy for more than 30 years.

It was in his 22nd job — while he was working at a San Diego scale company — that his ruse was discovered. His boss asked Garibay to read something to him.

"I tried to act dumb. I tried to act like I couldn't hear him," Garibay recalled. "I hesitated and then I told him, 'I can't read at all.' "

The supervisor began teaching Garibay to read.

It was a traumatic time. Garibay's wife of 25 years was mugged and injured severely. She lost her sight. She needed her husband to handle the banking, to read the mail. She was shocked and hurt to learn he had hidden his inability to read from her all those years.

Garibay now reads at the 11th-grade level, has begun his own scale-repairing company and in his spare time promotes literacy causes.

Like many undereducated people, Montgomery's greatest worry is that her children will not get a full education. Once they move into fourth grade or so, she can no longer help them with their homework.

The family owns five books. One is the Bible. The other four — about woodworking — the mother bought so that she and her son, Andrew, who was having problems in school, could make something together with their hands.

Andrew is in eighth grade at California Middle School. He reads at a third-grade level. He has a serious vision problem and needs glasses. He traded one pair away for candy when he was young. Montgomery has not been able to afford another pair. Three of her other four children also are behind in reading.

The other day, Tina, age 12, told her mother she wanted to become a poet. Aaron, 10, said he wanted to be a lawyer, then quickly changed, saying, "I want to be like you, Mom."

"Look at me," the mother said, her voice rising. "Do you want to slop hamburgers the rest of your life? Do you know I'm about to go out and try and find a job cleaning houses? If I had finished school and gone to college, I wouldn't be in this mess. I'm 38 years old and I don't have a job, and I don't want you kids to end up like me."

The passing on of illiteracy from one generation to the next is one of its most difficult aspects.

Like Montgomery, many non-reading parents have so many other problems that they do not have the time, means or money to take their children to the library or help them with their homework.

Many literacy experts believe that if the disturbing pattern of illiteracy is ever to end, conditions in public schools must improve dramatically.

It won't be an easy task.

A review of state test scores shows that 30 percent of all seventh-graders in Sacramento and 37 percent in Los Angeles are two or more grade levels behind their peers. Without intensive individual tutoring, there is little hope they can catch up, educators said.

Likewise, dropout figures are staggering. Currently, one-fourth of all students in the state quit school before graduating. In large cities, the rate rises to more than 40 percent.

"I think the system has failed these kids," said James Guthrie, education professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and co-director of Policy Analysis for California Education. "These kids are trapped in a cycle of despair. They haven't learned enough in the early grades of school to benefit from what should come later."

State schools chief Bill Honig agreed many students are not being well educated. Reform efforts begun in 1983 have brought improvements in two-thirds of all schools, but the remaining third have not progressed, he said.

"In a large number of schools nothing is going on," Honig said. "We still have a huge job to do in California."

Many teachers blamed students' low achievement on their home lives. Divorce, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, neglect, language barriers — these factors all get in the way of children being able to learn, they said.

Family life cited

"It all boils down to the home life," reading teacher Sally Brown said. "If that support isn't there, if the parents don't care, I'm sorry, but it's just not going to work."

Other teachers said some children can't learn because of limited intelligence.

"People are not created equal as far as ability goes," elementary school teacher Doris Salyer said. "I don't think all children are able to achieve at a high school level."

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Honig, along with the head of the California Teachers Association and many other educational researchers and teachers, strongly disagreed. Such low expectations by teachers are a major reason so many children are not learning all they should, they said.

"There is an incredible myth in education that all kids are taught the same and that some just can't learn," said Kati Haycock, executive director of the Oakland-based Achievement Council, which works to improve performance among low-income and minority students in California.

Nearly all teachers — as well as many educational leaders — are unanimous on one point: class sizes in California are too large. At an average of 28 students per class, they are bigger here than in any other state.

The California Teachers Association has begun a media campaign promoting an eventual ballot drive that would limit class sizes to 22 students. It would take an estimated $500 million a year to reduce student-teacher ratios in all grades by just one child.

Ed Foglia, president of the teachers group, said smaller classes are critically needed, but teachers in the meantime should try harder to reach all children.

"I don't want to put all the responsibility on the schools, but we have to do more. We should have the belief that all kids can achieve. We have to somehow break the cycle," he said.

"Just reducing class sizes without changing the expectations of teachers won't do it," Honig added. "Together the two can be dynamite. Either one by itself won't work."

Schools are important but not the only factor in ending illiteracy, according to Karl Haigler, director for the U.S. Department of Education's Adult Literacy Initiative. Even if schools turned out perfectly educated children tomorrow, they would not affect the nation's work force for 10 or 20 years. Haigler said 75 percent of the work force between now and the year 2000 is already in place.

It's up to states and local communities, not the federal government, to teach adult non-readers, Haigler said. He pointed to the California library system's volunteer tutor program as a model for other states.

Wide array of needs

Currently, however, only one in 10 of the English-speaking adult illiterates in California gets help from literacy programs such as the library or public adult education classes. And of those, only a fraction will improve their reading skills significantly, according to the new study by the state Department of Education.

The complex cycle of illiteracy in California and the nation can only be broken by a substantial infusion of money at all levels, said Thomas Sticht, one of the nation's leading literacy experts in San Diego. State and federal governments, businesses and schools must join to not only improve elementary and secondary education, but also to dramatically expand and integrate adult reading and job-training programs, said Sticht along with many educators and business leaders.

Paul Jurmo, program associate for the Business Council for Effective Literacy, said a 1985 study by the council found it would take $6 billion to $9 billion a year, coming from a variety of businesses and public sources, to alleviate adult illiteracy. Currently, the United States spends $100 million a year for all adult basic education programs, $8.1 million of that in California. This state spends an additional $64 million a year to help adult non-readers.

"Where it comes from I don't know," said Harvard Professor Jeanne Chall, one of the country's top reading researchers. "But if people are serious about literacy, you can't get it for nothing."

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Letter by letter, he seeks a new start at age 35

> ‘There’s another me inside that wants to get out. I’m getting weak and I have to let him out.’
>
> **— Hosea May**

By Gretchen Kell
Bee Staff Writer

On a scorching August morning, a small, bookish crowd files through the heavy wooden doors of West Sacramento's public library. As if at home, they cozy into quiet, familiar nooks to read.

Three elderly men start perusing the day's newspapers. A middle-aged man studies a mechanic's manual. And on a sunny patch of carpet, a preschooler launches into the alphabet song, not skipping a letter.

But 35-year-old Hosea May, hunched over a corner table, feels like an alien here. He is reading his first book.

"This is Sam's shop," May begins, his deep voice slowly punching each word. "The shop is in the va...va...va..."

"V-a-ll-ey," I say, stretching out the sounds.

"Valley," he sighs. "The shop is in the valley."

Jobless and with the reading skills of a primary school student, May caught a plane out of Denver in late 1985. He arrived on his uncle's doorstep in West Sacramento lugging a suitcase full of frustration.

An illiterate high school graduate, he'd tried but quit three jobs and college. May had entered college on a basketball scholarship, aspiring to be a psychologist. Unable to read his textbooks, he dropped out three weeks later.

Another major setback for May was being fired as a hospital orderly. He mistakenly wheeled two patients with similar last names to the wrong places. Later, he'd confused two labeled vials of blood.

"One day in Denver," he said, "I really sat down to think about my life and dang near cried. I thought, 'Why am I so dumb and not able to read like the others?' "

But May, ebullient and a self-described "go-getter type of guy," always harbored hope that once he learned to read, his luck would change.

"When I came here I told myself, 'I want to start a new life, like being reborn. I'm going to get me a tutor, a steady girlfriend and a job,' " he said, " 'and make me a home.' "

Last April, May, a Vietnam veteran, asked Purple Heart Veterans Services in Yolo County for help. He was linked with the Sacramento Literacy Program where in August he found a tutor.

And I found a student.

A former junior high school teacher, I'd found myself missing teaching English — but not the struggle I had trying to interest 200 preteens in the subject. Boggled by first loves, acne and peer pressure, they saw value only in learning to spell "awesome."

"Miss Kell," they used to whine, "do we *have* to learn this stuff?"

Hosea May doesn't ask that question.

A minimum-wage truck driver at a Sacramento warehouse, he can't read the labels on the boxes he loads and unloads. "Hey, where does this go?" he frequently asks a co-worker, bluffing it.

He can't decipher street signs, newspapers, candy wrappers, the telephone book or bank statements. Recently, he flunked a U.S. Postal Service exam that would have qualified him for a higher-paying job.

May knows his future depends on learning to read and, as I'm finding out, having someone teach him.

"There's another me inside that wants to get out," he told me. "I'm getting weak and I have to let him out."

I was five minutes late to one of our tutoring sessions at Yolo County's Turner Branch Library. After the session, May enveloped my hand in his large, leathery palms to say goodbye. "Don't forget about me," he said

"I won't," I said puzzled. "See you next week." I wondered why he'd said that because we always meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

It wasn't until I reached my car that I realized my tardiness had worried him. To May, it was a sign I might be giving up on him the way many of his teachers had in the past.

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If May's elementary school teachers in Denver gave up on him, it was because he was rarely in school. In second grade, when most youngsters are learning to read, May's father, a truck driver, decided to take the boy with him on the road.

Off and on for five years, father and son traveled together, making deliveries in Kansas, Maryland, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Washington. May said his dad "learned him" in the cab with crayons, paper, and blues and jazz.

"He thought if I sang along with the radio," said May, "I'd get my vocabulary going."

May returned to school full time as a sixth-grader. But the street life — "skipping school, throwing dice, smoking pot, stealing bikes, taking mama's money" — lured May from the books, he said.

By the end of the year, May had been placed in juvenile hall twice.

May made it to junior high but didn't last long. In seventh grade, he broke into a drug store and went to juvenile hall again — for seven months. "*I'am doning OK,*" he wrote his mother, a housewife on welfare.

During the rest of his school days, May turned his attention to sports. A popular athlete with flunking grades, he asked his sister to tutor him. But frustrated with his illiteracy, she resorted to doing his homework for him.

"Damn, you're useless," she told him.

Some teachers gave May an easy out, too, giving him C grades so he could keep playing basketball and baseball, he said. Meanwhile, he couldn't read a textbook, do essay questions, write book reports or read aloud in class.

"The kids laughed at the way I (read)," said May. "I was embarrassed and even got hot-tempered and mad. It always gave me a bad feeling.

"There was no way I could catch up. In high school, I didn't care anymore."

May's only triumphs sat inside the athletic department's trophy case. But he could read only his name on the plaques, not his accomplishments.

In 1970, with his report card peppered with D's, May received his high school diploma. "I didn't even know how to spell diploma," he said. "All I know was it said Hosea May. I've still got it today and can't read it."

It may be a long time before he can.

Just two months ago, May and I began a series of four skill books called The Laubach Way to Reading. They're designed for adults, but when I scanned the first text I thought it looked too childish for a 35-year-old man.

The first lesson had a chart with pictures of a bird, cup, dish, fish, girl and hand. The words "bird," "cup" and so on were printed next to them. Another row listed the first letter of each word.

My scripted part made me feel like a kindergarten teacher:

"This is a bird," I told May, pointing to the picture. "Say bird."

Next, I traced a letter "b" superimposed over the bird's body.

"This *looks* like a bird. Say bird."

Later on in the lesson, I asked May for the sound of the letter "b."

"Duh," he said. I sat stunned.

Then I remembered a telling moment in my Laubach tutor training workshop, held one weekend in May at the Rancho Cordova Community Library.

Our instructor, Dave Crosson, had placed a story with giant letters on an easel. It was in Russian. Adrenaline flowed as he walked around the room, calling on people to read. None of the 70 of us knew a single word.

"Maybe the way this looks to you and me," he said, "is the way English looks to your students."

These days, May is progressing from "bird" to "building," from consonants to double consonants, from Skill Book 1 to Skill Book 2. He's writing sentences as well as reading them.

But I have to keep reminding myself of Crosson's words.

After 20 tutoring sessions, I still daydream that, someday soon, May will rush up to tell me he's read his first magazine article, written a letter or understood a road map.

May himself figured he'd be reading a newspaper by December.

The truth is that, like many other adult literacy students, it may take a year or two for May to finish the series. By then, he'll only be ready to read junior high school-level materials.

Being behind isn't the only thing slowing him down.

With a full-time job, May can't be a full-time student. We meet only a few hours a week — after he's worked a long, tiring day. At home — a crowded apartment he shares with his girlfriend and her four daughters and brother — it's hard to study.

In September, his car broke down. To get to work and his tutoring sessions, he pedaled a 20-mile circuit in 102-degree heat on a borrowed bike.

But against the odds, we plod bravely on through phonics, short and long vowel sounds, and one-page stories like "Eggs to Sell," "At the Doctor's" and "The Rat," charting progress in steps, not leaps.

There was the day May finally pronounced the "l" sound correctly, and the time he spelled "whistle" and "picture" without help.

"I was in the supermarket," May told me recently, "and I recognized a bag of kitty litter. I said, 'I know that word! It's 'kitty!' "

Now October leaves swirl past the window as May and I discuss words from a new short story, "Duck Hunting." He knows "cut" is the root of "cutting" and the difference between "sun" and "son."

"Is the 't' doubled in the word 'hunting'?" I ask.

"Yes," he says. "H-u-n-t-t-i-n-g."

It's a new season, but we have a long way to go.

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Tracking a poor reader's stumbling steps through school

ILLITERACY'S

CYCLE OF DESPAIR

SECOND OF THREE PARTS

By Deb Kollars
Bee Staff Writer

In an unruly classroom at California Middle School, a dark-eyed seventh-grader named Laura Montero sits quietly, day after day, stumbling over simple words like "justice," rarely finishing her work before the bell rings.

She is 13 years old, has average intelligence and reads at a third-grade level. At a time when many junior high students are bracing for algebra, compositions and "Romeo and Juliet," Laura has arrived at a different crossroads. She can barely read, spell, multiply or divide. Her teacher holds little hope she will ever catch up. She doesn't like school much anymore.

"I work as hard as I can, but I feel so behind," she said, looking down at her hands. "I'm scared of high school. I don't think I can do it."

The road Laura will follow is almost assured. She has spent her entire academic life on it and there's no turning back. When she emerges from public school within the next few years, Laura will likely join millions of adults who have serious literacy problems.

Her journey is not unique. California schools are failing to educate at least one-third of all students, according to test results, dropout rates and research by leading educational experts in the state.

Although test scores and graduation requirements indicate schools are doing better these days, many children who are poor, who live in big cities, who are minority members are coming through school without ever learning to read, to write, to understand history or math or science.

Laura's report cards show that year after year she was passed into the next grade at Oak Ridge Elementary School in Sacramento without having adequate reading and language skills for her age. The older she got, the further behind she fell.

Teachers in Laura's past said during inter-

‘I have a room full of students who are as far behind as Laura. I'll be lucky if I can raise her reading level by one year.’

— teacher Brooks Cassidy

views that they either didn't realize she was so far behind or did their best and could not do anything more about her low skills because of large class sizes and the serious home problems of many of their students.

Brooks Cassidy, her teacher now, said she probably won't progress mucn this year, either.

"I have a room full of students who are as far behind as Laura. I'll be lucky if I can raise her reading level by one year," he said. "I have so many behavior problems in this class right now that I just don't have the time to give her the individual help she needs."

Laura is known as a remedial student. She is not alone.

In the Sacramento City Unified School District, 872 of 2,951, or 30 percent of all seventh-graders, are two or more years below grade level in reading. Another 874 eighth-graders are similarly behind. In Los Angeles, 13,000, or 37 percent, of all seventh-graders are two or more years behind. In Oakland, in San Francisco, in San Diego, the story is the same.

These children reach middle school with severely low skills. They can't multiply five by six. They can't spell the names of states. They can't use a ruler. They don't know what the plot of a story is. They have no idea where Israel lies on a map.

"I get kids who don't know that California is a state and Sacramento is a city," Luther Burbank High School teacher Barbara Johnson said, shaking her head.

Language barriers

Poorly written textbooks, language barriers and crowded classrooms are a major part of the problem, state Superintendent of Schools Bill Honig said.

He and other educational experts also feel that a primary cause of academic failure among children is the low expectations their teachers hold for them.

Students with low skills or who tend to learn more slowly are almost always grouped together, especially for reading. Top students have their own groups. The groups may have names — the bluebirds, the cardinals. This is called tracking. Once a student is placed in a low track, it is nearly impossible to move higher, said Alice Furry, director of curriculum and instructional services for the Sacramento County Office of Education. The lowest tracks almost always include a disproportionate number of poor and minority children.

Laura has spent all her years in school in the lowest reading groups.

"Sometimes it's kind of embarrassing," she said softly. "Sometimes when I read, the teacher has to tell me the word and then all the kids laugh. I always wanted to tell my teachers to make me smarter, but I was scared to say anything."

Too many teachers, Furry said, live by a graph known as the bell curve. They are taught in college that when a test is given, some students will score high and show up at the top end of the curve, while others will score low and land at the bottom. They are told that this is natural.

Furry and other literacy experts believe this is wrong. All children can achieve at high levels, they said. Some may need more time or extra attention, but all can learn if given the chance and encouragement.

Skills needed

"Unless a child has a physical disability, there is no reason that child should not learn to read," said Gerald Hayward, who heads the Sacramento center for Policy Analysis for California Education. Not all students can become atomic scientists, he said, but to prepare for today's job market all need to have at least high school level abilities.

Cassidy, Laura's seventh-grade teacher, said she has plenty of intelligence.

"Laura was shortchanged in her elementary education," he said. "Somebody failed to help her reach her potential. She is a darling, sweet girl. She wants to learn so badly I can see the tears in her eyes sometimes. She is a very slow learner, but there is no reason she should be so far behind. Somewhere along the way somebody didn't take the time they should have with her."

Laura's stepmother, Donna Montero, said, "I have always tried to encourage Laura to read, but it's hard now. She's just given up like she's never going to catch up."

Many teachers said all children simply cannot read and comprehend at high school levels. Some said that divorce, poverty, drug abuse and language barriers are preventing teachers from teaching and children from learning. Until such problems are relieved and until class sizes are reduced dramatically, kids from disadvantaged homes will continue to do poorly, they said.

Other teachers said some kids just aren't smart enough.

"We have to face the fact that people are born with different amounts of intelligence," said California Middle School teacher Sharon Epstein. "It's so easy to say

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everyone is equal. But we have to accept it. Not all kids can learn."

Furry said such low expectations can be devastating to children.

Students who are behind in junior high usually fall further behind by the time they reach high school. Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento, for example, has 20 remedial classes in English and math for about 400 of its 1,800 students. Many read at a third- or fourth-grade level, Principal J.L. Handy said.

To hide their poor academic skills, youngsters often become the class clown or pick fights in class. Others bypass failing grades by cheating. Quiet children like Laura Montero end up in the back of the class, struggling, too shy to raise a hand for help.

Still others skip classes or drop out completely. In California, one out of four students quits school before graduating. In cities such as Sacramento and Los Angeles, the rate rises to more than 40 percent.

'I don't think I can do it,' says Laura, looking ahead to high school

Laura has two younger brothers, 12 and 8, and an older sister, 14. They, too, are behind in school. They have had many of the same teachers at Oak Ridge, which has mostly poor and minority children.

The family has lived for years in a pleasant but modest home in the Fruitridge area. They speak only English. They have been through some hard times.

Vincent Montero, the father, is 38 and has worked 16 years for Delta Sugar Corp. Laura's mother died in a car accident when Laura was 5. A grandmother took care of the children on and off while the father worked. He eventually remarried.

Laura had leukemia when she was a baby and has been in remission since. Some of Laura's teachers blamed the child's low skills on her illness, saying radiation treatments may have hurt her ability to learn. However, family doctors said that although Laura may be slower, she should be able to achieve as well as other children.

Neither Donna nor Vincent Montero finished high school. They stress again and again to their children how important school is. They keep books and magazines in their home. Several past and present Oak Ridge teachers said they have been concerned parents.

"We always made sure our kids were in school. We know we're maybe not the smartest people in the world, but we wanted all our kids to get a good education. We were counting on the schools to give it to them. I kind of feel let down," the stepmother said.

Laura's old report cards and test scores show a steady, discouraging path through Oak Ridge, located on Sacramento Boulevard.

Nearly every quarter of every year, checkmarks stood in the "below grade level in reading" box. She repeated first grade. In seven years, she earned 51 A's, 162 B's, 165 C's and 6 D's. She was absent one or two days each quarter.

Laura's first-grade teacher, Brenda Garner, wrote at the end of the year, "Laura's immaturity has hindered her progress in first grade. Another year in first grade should give her necessary strengths she now lacks." Laura's father signed the forms and the child was held back.

Standardized tests, given in the fifth month of school, showed her reading at a 1.2 level. That meant her reading skills were up to about the second month of the first grade. Her grades were mostly D's and C's.

Garner had Laura again for the repeat year in first grade. Her reading score moved up to 1.5. Garner marked her "on grade level" that June and promoted her to second grade.

In a recent interview, Garner said she often holds back students who are not ready for the next grade. She recalled Laura was a sweet, emotional girl.

"I remember Laura getting up and sharing and crying. She was going to visit her mother's grave," Garner said.

Laura spent second grade in Jose Ramon Gonzalez's classroom. He marked her "below grade level" at the end of the year and assigned her to third. He gave her B's and C's and wrote, "Laura has worked hard throughout the year. I enjoyed having her in my class."

Tests showed Laura reading at a 1.7 level.

Asked if he thought her progress that year was adequate, Gonzalez said, "In the case of Laura, as far as I can say, I did my best. But if I didn't know her, I might say the teacher that year failed her."

In third grade, Laura had a teacher named Carol Peters.

"Miss Peters was the only teacher who really tried to help Laura," her stepmother said. "She told me that the kids who she got in third grade didn't even know second-grade stuff so she had to try to teach both second- and third-grade things. She kept Laura in during recess to try to catch her up."

On Laura's fourth-quarter report card, Peters wrote, "Laura is a delight to have in class. She tries hard and makes slow, steady progress."

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By the following winter she had improved in reading more than any other year she had spent at Oak Ridge: In the middle of fourth grade, she hit 3.0. It was the last time she would gain more than one year's worth of reading skills within one year.

Carol Peters, now teaching at Didion Elementary in the Pocket area, remembered Laura as bright and quite capable of learning.

'High expectations'

"Those kids were low. But I had high expectations for them, and what I expect and demand I almost always get," Peters said.

"I can't change what happens in their home lives, whether they have a mom and a dad or three moms and three dads. I've had 8-year-old kids who helped their mothers shoot up on heroin in the morning before they came to school. And I've had kids who had parents who gave them everything they ever wanted. To me, kids are kids and I believe they all can learn. If they can't do it one way, you can find another way to do it."

As for Laura: "I loved Miss Peters."

Fourth-grade report card comments from teacher Michelle Williams focused on multiplication and spelling: Laura was having trouble with both. She was marked below grade level in reading all four quarters.

By fifth grade, the comments had turned to emotional issues.

"Laura always tries but needs to develop some self-confidence. . . . Laura needs lots of encouragement in her work . . . She would benefit from summer school," teacher Willie Pattillo wrote.

The annual test showed Laura had gained a month in reading over the past year. She was at 3.1. Pattillo assigned her to grade six.

Pattillo said in an phone interview that she had grouped Laura with children who were also behind in reading that year. That's how she always does it. She said sometimes children catch up, but often they don't.

Low reading marks

"That was so long ago, but as I recall, the teachers she had did their best with her," Pattillo said.

Laura's last elementary teacher was Kathy Iseri. She gave Laura C's and marked her below in reading throughout the year.

"I get a lot of students like that and we just try to do as much as we can with them," Iseri said in a recent interview. "I couldn't tell you why they come to me so low. I have to spend so much energy trying to get them up. I don't have the time to wonder why. Crying over spilled milk isn't going to help."

Laura got a 3.8 reading score that year.

This fall, she entered middle school. Her seventh-grade teacher, Cassidy, said Laura now reads about as well as an average third-grader.

Ernest Shaffer, former principal at Oak Ridge, said that during the years Laura was there, he and his teachers worked hard to boost student achievement, especially in reading. Test scores rose between 1983 and 1986. He said he was aware some students were behind but felt everything possible had been done for Laura and other Oak Ridge students.

"And yet," Shaffer added, "I know some kids are slipping through the cracks."

Laura's principal at California Middle School, Jay Kenagy, said realistically he hopes she will be able to improve one grade level in reading this year.

"Middle schools can't work miracles," Kenagy said. "We can't go back and make up three or four years of lost time. If we get even two years of growth in nine months, I'm shouting from the housetops."

Said Cassidy: "What makes this whole situation so sad is that there are so many, many Lauras out there."

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Losing race to keep up, she's scared

Success amid the gloom

By Judy Tachibana
Bee Staff Writer

Some see them as islands of hope.

Less than a decade ago, these three schools — each in a big city, each with a large minority population — had reputations that drove some parents to pull out their children.

Today they are flocking back.

What happened?

In Oakland, in Los Angeles, in Sacramento, the story is the same: A strong principal instilled great expectations in the teachers and students and turned the school around.

- Squeezed into a corner bounded by a busy freeway and a shopping center, Claremont Middle School in Oakland now has a waiting list to get in. The school's eighth-grade test scores have soared. Four years ago the school scored below the national norm in all subject areas. Last year it ranked above the norm.
- At Freeport Elementary School in south Sacramento, where scores on standardized tests had been among the lowest in the district, sixth-grade students last year scored at least five points higher than their counterparts across the district in reading, written expression and math.
- Some parents used to falsify their addresses to keep their children out of Audubon Junior High School in Los Angeles because of its reputation as a rough campus and a school with low academic standards. With a new principal who has inspired his staff and students, Audubon received state recognition as a distinguished school last year. This year it was one of 28 California schools to receive federal recognition.

"Those are not the only examples of schools on the move, but they are far outnumbered by schools that are either remaining the same or getting worse," said Kati Haycock, executive director of the Achievement Council, an organization devoted to improving education.

The principals in these successful schools cultivate an atmosphere conducive to learning and involve parents and the community in the school. And students are rising to meet their expectations.

Teachers in these three schools are breaking away from rote drills that bore students. Instead, they are emphasizing comprehension and critical thinking. In reading classes, teachers encourage their students to go beyond the mere spelling and pronunciation of words to understand and question the meaning of those words.

The turning point at Claremont came five years ago when Barbara Daniels became principal of the Oakland school. In those days, she said, students thought going to Claremont was a social event. Only about 20 percent carried book bags and about as many turned in half-completed homework.

Today students rush to get to class on time, carrying covered textbooks and binders crammed with notebook paper. Homework is regularly assigned and quality work is returned to teachers, said Daniels. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the business at Claremont is education.

And the community is responding. Claremont, which had been 87 percent black, now reflects the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood — 71 percent of the students are black, 21 percent white, 4 percent Asian and 4 percent Hispanic.

> ‘The thing we are really doing . . . is to expect all of our kids to achieve.’
>
> **— Barbara Daniels, principal of Claremont Middle School**

> ‘We wanted . . . our kids to get a good education. We were counting on the schools to give it to them. I kind of feel let down.’
>
> **— stepmother Donna Montero**

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The emphasis on academics is showing results. Tested in 1983, eighth-grade students fell below the national norm in all areas on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. Recent scores show that Claremont eighth-grade students are now scoring significantly higher than their counterparts across the country (see chart). The middle school, whose student population grew from 340 to its maximum capacity of 520, is making progress even with most classes packed with 30 students.

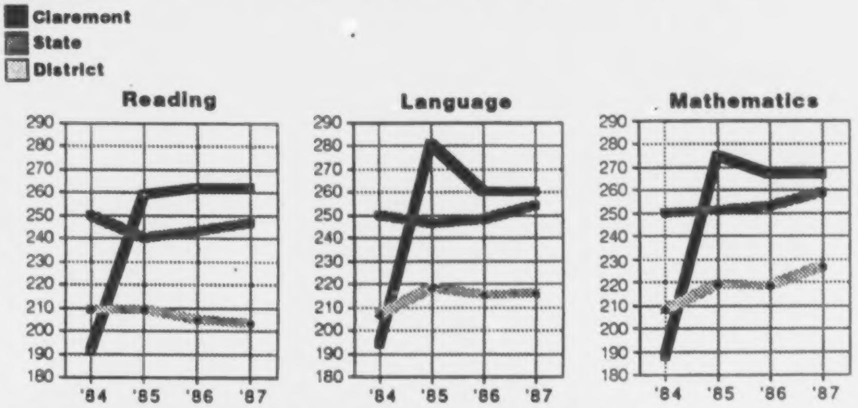
The school received $100,000 to help kids who scored below grade level five years ago, but each year as scores rose the economic impact aid was decreased. Now the school receives none.

"The thing we are really doing to make a difference is to expect all of our kids to achieve," Daniels said. "We are creating a climate that learning is what we are here for. I believe very strongly that it is a matter of what we expect them to do,

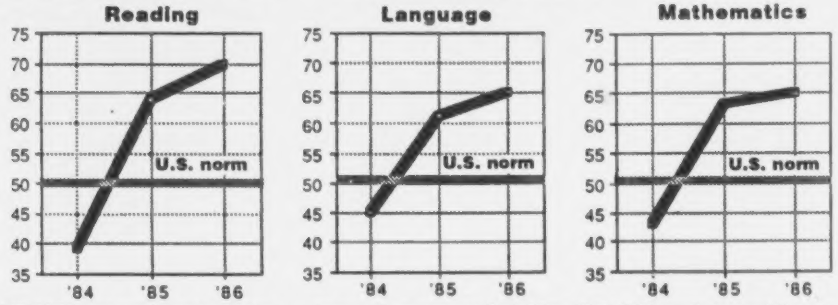
A school on the move

Claremont Middle School in Oakland is a prime example of a school serving lower-income, urban students where the administration turned things around. The charts below show the improvement by eighth-grade students on two major standardized tests.

California Assessment Program (CAP)



Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)*



*1987 CTBS test results not available

Sources: Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, California Assessment Program

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"We are creating a climate that learning is what we are here for. I believe very strongly that it is a matter of what we expect them to do, and they will stretch to it."

To help them stretch, Daniels made a year of science or a semester each of science and computer literacy a requirement in both seventh and eighth grades. She also eliminated tracked classes, which put children in different groups according to how fast they're learning.

Without tracking, students are treated equally, said teacher Stella Kennedy. "We have said to them in a fundamental way that they are all going to make it," Kennedy said.

In Kennedy's classroom, students of varying abilities worked together at computer terminals writing articles for the student newspaper. Students have chosen partners, and the pairs are mixed racially and academically, Kennedy said.

"The one thing that is really special and different about this school is our school climate," Kennedy said. "I have taught in a lot of schools and I have never taught in a school like this one. Students feel equal. They don't have a caste system based on academics or economics."

Freeport Elementary School in south Sacramento also eliminated grouping and has high expectations for its more than 500 mostly minority students.

Four years ago, sixth-grade students at Freeport fell below the district's average scores in reading, writing and math on California Assessment Program tests. The students were among those scoring lowest in the district, said Morris Mueller, research specialist for the district.

Last year, Freeport sixth-graders outscored their counterparts across the district in each subject area.

"The program we are offering children at Freeport school is paying off," said Oscar Satow, who instituted a program known as the Achievement in Basic Curriculum when he became principal in 1983.

Freeport students are expected to learn grade-level material. Teachers provide direct instruction and involve the class in guided practice. After several weeks of instruction, students are tested for mastery of a certain skill. If they do not score at least 80 percent or better, they do not fail, but they are retaught the skill and are given another try at passing the test.

"You just don't test and go on to the next chapter and assume they will get it next year," said resource teacher Helen Plumb. "We're not going on the bell curve concept" in which a certain percentage of students are expected to fail, Plumb said.

‘You just don't test and go on to the next chapter and assume they will get it next year.’

— teacher Helen Plumb, Freeport Elementary School

A walk through the halls of Audubon Junior High School in Los Angeles makes clear to a visitor why this "inner city" school won a California Distinguished Schools Award last year and why Principal Gene McCallum flew to Washington, D.C., last month to accept a secondary school recognition award from the U.S. Department of Education.

Most students were thoroughly engaged in classroom activities. Some read dramatic parts in a class taught by Evaline Kruse, 1985 California teacher of the year and a 19-year veteran of Audubon. Students eagerly responded to French teacher Jeff Jolna, who taught the class how to order at a French restaurant.

Despite the heat and noise from repair crews drilling desks in the hallway, Frank Mandelson captivated the 38 students crammed into his youth and the law class with the details of a first-degree murder.

Mandelson and other teachers credited McCallum for their renewed enthusiasm for teaching. Teachers said they have felt free to do their best work since he took over leadership of Audubon in 1984.

"Other school administrators did not want to hear from us (teachers)," said Mandelson, who has been teaching for 18 years. "Their standard answer to our suggestions was 'no.' After two or three 'nos,' you stop trying. I would just do my teaching and go home."

At Audubon, they are encouraged to try new ideas, many teachers said. For example, Mandelson said he developed a workshop to teach his colleagues how to write grants, and took a class to the courthouse using public transportation.

"The difference is the present administration appreciates teaching," mentor teacher Jolna said. "I know I am happier being here. I am working harder than ever before. The staff feels better about themselves. They are producing more now. . . . I think he (McCallum) has taught us not to be afraid to make mistakes, to take chances, to show we care."

While CAP scores at Audubon, where 93 percent of the students are black and other minorities make up the remaining 7 percent, have not yet reached the state average, the 1,700 students are making gradual gains. The below-state averages did not stop state and federal educators from honoring Audubon.

"That's one of the best — if not the best — junior high schools I have ever been in," said Mary Ann Overton, regional representative of the state Department of Education and site evaluator of Audubon.

"These were the most alive classrooms I have ever been in at the secondary level. I would be willing to stack it up against the quality of education anywhere."

Other educators in California are also trying to improve the reading skills of students.

The Elk Grove and San Juan school districts have embraced Project Read, a new teaching method that helps children organize their thoughts and better understand what they are reading. The Sacramento City Unified School District is creating three model high-tech programs in low-income schools to boost achievement of poor and minority children.

In Los Angeles, an experimental plan to spend $5.5 million on smaller class sizes, extra counselors and new materials at 10 predominantly black elementary schools began this fall in an effort to improve student test scores.

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ILLITERACY'S

CYCLE OF DESPAIR

LAST OF THREE PARTS

School is out, life is tough

By Gracie Bonds Staples
and Mari McQueen
Bee Staff Writers

For adults who missed learning to read in school, there are few second chances.

Less than 10 percent of the state's 1.7 million English-speaking adult illiterates are enrolled in literacy programs offered by adult schools, community colleges, libraries and community groups.

Of the 120,000 enrolled, only a tiny fraction is likely to achieve even a junior high school level of proficiency, said Pat Rickard, a student assessment consultant for the state Department of Education.

Half drop out after 100 hours of instruction, gaining perhaps one or two grade levels in ability. Adult pressures and responsibilities — jobs, child rearing, housekeeping — mean few adults have the time and resources necessary to learn the skills they didn't master in childhood, say tutors and administrators.

School is out and life for them is tough.

"It's scary, filled with fear ... always running and hiding. You become a spectator in your own life," said 39-year-old Bob Tettleton, a warehouse foreman at a Contra Costa County newspaper. Tettleton was reading at a third-grade level before he sought help.

Even though more than half of California's 3.1 million adult illiterates are native English speakers, the vast majority of adult literacy programs — 80 percent — are geared to the needs of immigrants. Shame, embarrassment and fear associated with illiteracy keep many English-speaking adults from seeking help, literacy volunteers and administrators say. Immigrants, by contrast, are less likely to feel ashamed of their lack of English skills and are consequently more willing to seek instruction.

Adult illiterates come from every segment of society: Fernando Seranno, 34, is an unemployed high school graduate in San Diego and reads at the third-grade level. Lemoyne Jacobson, 41, owner of an auto parts business, also graduated from high school unable to read. Katherne Compton of San Francisco, 76, grew up on a farm in the rural south and dropped out in the second grade. Kelly Cochran of Sacramento, 30, an unemployed laborer, says he turned to drugs because of inferiority feelings caused by his inability to read.

But Cochran and the others are different from most other illiterate Californians: They represent that small portion who have decided to learn how to read. Each signed up for literacy programs after reaching a turning point in their lives.

Jacobson wanted to be able to share more information with the people he serves in his business. Compton wanted to read the Bible. Cochran enrolled in the Sacramento Public Library Literacy Service after entering a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program. Seranno simply wants to fit into society.

Why didn't they learn to read in school?

There are many causes of adult illiteracy among native-born English speakers. Often, older men and women never learned to read because adult responsibilities snatched them from school at an early age. Compton, a Mississippi native, was reared on an Arkansas farm and left school in the second grade to help raise her four younger sisters and brothers, one of whom grew up to earn a Ph.D.

Others, such as Cochran, dropped out of high school. Seventy percent of adult illiterates are high school dropouts, according to a national study.

Also like Cochran, an undetermined number of adult illiterates may suffer from learning or developmental disabilities such as dyslexia, which may be responsible for their failure to master reading skills in school. No one knows exactly how many illiterates have learning disabilities because no studies have been done, Rickard said.

Cochran was 14 before he was diagnosed as having dyslexia, a perceptual disorder that causes a person's mind to reverse letters and numbers.

Because he was obviously bright — tests indicated a high IQ — parochial and middle school teachers didn't believe Cochran couldn't read, he said, and treated him as a discipline problem. He rebelled and was bounced from school to school. Cochran finally dropped out in the 11th grade and soon after ran afoul of the law by dealing drugs. He went to jail for the first time when he was 17 and has been in and out ever since. In between, he's held such jobs as a truck loader, hod carrier and bricklayer.

Some adults, such as Seranno and Jacobson, graduated from high school but never learned to read. The National Assessment of Educational Progress estimated that 700,000 functionally illiterate young people graduate from high school nationally every year and another 700,000 drop out.

"The educational system totally threw my life in the trash can. I wanted to go to college. I wanted to work, but I can't do anything. It ruined my whole life. I don't know history. I don't know geography. I don't know nothing," sighed Seranno, slumped on a wood post across the street from San Diego High School, where he graduated in 1971.

Robert Amparan, principal at San Diego High since 1981, said Seranno graduated with his class but received only a certificate of completion, given to students who do not have a 1.5 grade average.

Jacobson, another high school graduate, managed to make a successful life for himself despite his third-grade reading ability. The father of two girls, aged 11 and 15, he owns an auto parts business. His wife is a certified public accountant. They live in a $145,000 home in El Cajon, 20 miles south of San Diego.

Jacobson attended public schools in Iowa.

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"I have never been able to read. I could read enough to get by, but I read so slow most of the time when I'm finished I don't know what I read," he said.

Able to earn a living despite his reading handicap, Jacobson is more fortunate than many adult illiterates. There is little room in today's job market for the 23 million Americans who cannot read. Most of the good jobs — jobs that pay enough to support a family — created in today's economy require the ability to learn new and sometimes complex operations quickly. Assembly line and unskilled construction jobs are becoming rare.

Seranno said, "Every job I ever had I couldn't hold onto because sooner or later I had to read. I'd either be laid off or fired. I tried to get into the military, but I couldn't pass the test."

Once considered the employer — and literacy provider — of last resort, the armed forces today turn away young men and women who can't read. All branches and most job categories within the military also have become more technologically sophisticated. As a result, the armed forces no longer actively recruit non-high school graduates, and non-grads must pass the entrance exam with a higher score than graduates to qualify.

Glenn Foreman, public information officer with the U.S. Army Recruiting Battalion for Northern California and Nevada, explained:

"The Army, like the other services, is very technical now. Even infantrymen must be able to read in order to operate a weapon. It would be terrible to be in a war and be unable to read traffic signs or an operations order. If you can't read, you will not be encouraged to join the military under any circumstances."

For the past three months, Seranno has been attending an adult education typing course in an effort to teach himself the alphabet. He hasn't given up hope of improving his life by learning how to read.

But he and the others still have a long way to go.

Only the most highly motivated, most well-situated Californians enrolled in literacy programs — a tiny percentage — are likely one day to read well enough to obtain a general equivalency diploma.

"We like to point to them, but in many cases they are the exception, not the rule," said Rickard.

Ideally, adults who read at a fourth-grade level or lower would continue in a tutoring program until they attained a sixth-grade level of competency. From there, they would attend adult education classes until they achieved high school level competency, enabling them to receive an equivalency diploma, or transfer to community college remedial classes.

Most of those enrolled in adult programs, however, do not acquire even sixth-grade reading ability before they drop out, administrators report.

And for those who do persevere in the programs, it is difficult or impossible to overcome years of educational neglect in a matter of months.

"You have an adult, in the case of a native speaker, who in some cases has been through 10 or 12 years of formal schooling. Then the public feels he should enter an adult program and learn in three months. That's unrealistic. It will take years," Rickard said.

"What absolutely astounds me is that people think if we have an awareness campaign and get volunteers, we'll solve the problem. But we need a much more comprehensive approach. No one agency or institution can be expected to solve the problem. We need a collaboration of schools, business and industry, and a long-term commitment."

Other experts say high dropout rates do not necessarily indicate adult literacy programs are failing. Experts such as Bennett say adult progress should not be judged by grade levels but by whether adults can read well enough to do what they need to do, whether that is reading to their children or qualifying for a job, or getting a diploma.

Katherne Compton said if she's learning as fast as her tutor, friends and family say she is, "it's because I want to. And I want to so bad, I study day and night. I got my dictionary. I got my pencils. I got my paper.

"I'm tickled that I can write things like g-i-r-l, girl, and f-r-o-m, from. I used to couldn't spell those words."

The situation is more hopeful for those entering adult education programs with a sixth-grade reading level, Rickard said.

"They do have a very good chance of achieving a functional literacy level that will sustain them on the job. A general equivalency diploma is then a realistic goal," she said.

Unfortunately, many will never get the chance to advance that far. Offered the opportunity to get literacy help first, job-training applicants frequently turn down the chance in order to earn a wage, even though learning to read would result in higher-paying employment, said the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency eligibility supervisor, Leola Spencer.

Government-sponsored job placement and employment training counselors say illiteracy among the economically disadvantaged makes it doubly difficult to train and find work for poor applicants and may even underlie the low success rates of some programs.

At least half of those in literacy programs drop out, literacy providers say, because of competing demands on their time: jobs, transportation needs, inability to get child care. Some adult illiterates are plagued by a host of other serious problems stemming from poverty and ignorance.

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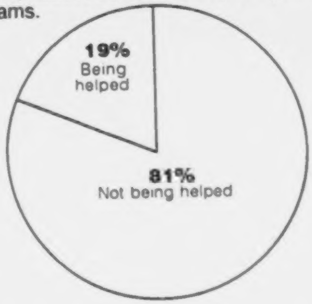
Help for the illiterate

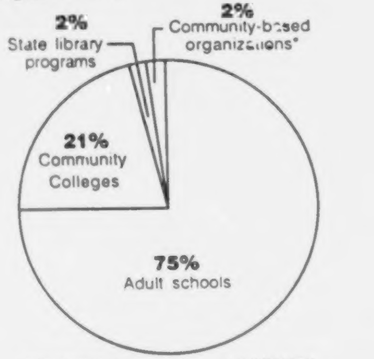
How many are getting it?

Of 3.1 million Californians judged functionally illiterate, about 600,000 are helped by literacy programs.



Where are they getting it?

Of those being helped, these are the programs lending assistance.

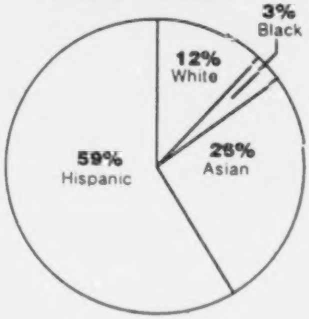


*California Literacy Inc. and Literacy Volunteers of America

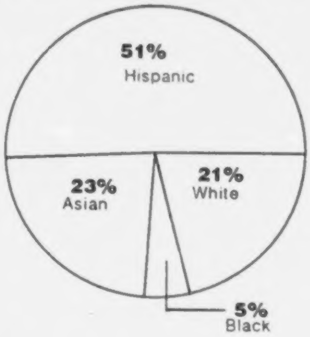
Who is helped and who is not

In California's literacy programs, 79% of students are enrolled in classes teaching English as a second language. In the two largest programs, here are the enrollment breakdowns by ethnic group:

Adult schools

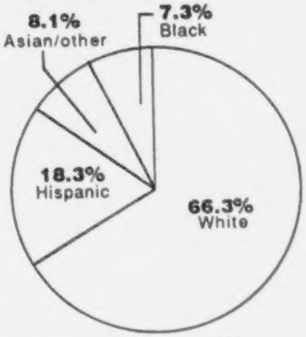


Community colleges



State ethnic makeup

(percent of total population)



Source: SRA Associates study, July 1987, prepared for State Department of Education

Bee graphic

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Immigrants get lion's share of literacy funds

Bee Metro Staff

This year, it's costing California about $64 million for programs to combat adult illiteracy, and the state is using another $8.1 million in federal funds, according to the state Education Department.

Most of that goes to teach immigrants English.

Basic education and courses in English as a second language, also known as ESL, offered through the school districts serve the largest number of adult illiterates, about 458,000. Community colleges reach another 128,000. But 89 percent of classes offered in adult schools and 42 percent of community college literacy classes are oriented toward teaching English to immigrants.

The California Literacy Campaign of the California State Library is the only program primarily serving native English speakers. In the 1986-87 fiscal year, 15,170 adults received instruction in 46 state library programs. Volunteer tutors in those programs help individuals learn to read using instructional methods geared toward people with minimal language skills, usually at or below the fourth-grade level.

Only 16 percent of state library programs are immigrant-oriented. Seventeen more library programs are in the planning stages, according to Al Bennett, state library literacy specialist.

Private, community-based organizations such as California Literacy Inc. and Literacy Volunteers of America served about 14,000 adults in the state, but some of them were in programs offered jointly by California Literacy, LVA and the public libraries.

Some critics of current instructional methods and volunteer programs say simplistic materials and methods geared to the needs of children rather than adults are partly to blame for high dropout rates and minimal reading gains among adult learners.

Thomas G. Sticht, a top researcher in the field of literacy and the president of a private consulting firm, is such a critic. Based on more than 20 years of study of U.S. military basic education and training, he believes that integrating reading instruction with job training works best for adults. His firm recently designed a functional skills program for the U.S. Navy.

Linda Smith, adult education consultant for the state Department of Education, said criticism of instructional materials as juvenile and irrelevant may have been valid 25 years ago, but most programs today, including those in adult schools, make an effort to use materials that are meaningful to students, and better textbooks are constantly being developed.

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They seek to learn a new voice

Waves of immigrants crowd English classes

By Tom Coakley
Bee Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — Mexican-born Juan Villegas learned what he had to in English to survive on the job at the fried chicken restaurant where he worked for 11 of his 13 years in the United States.

"Bis-cuit sand-wich . . . fish-and-chips," Villegas intones, sitting in the office of a counselor at the Evans Community Adult School.

He memorized the menu, figured out how to work the cash register.

Now he wants more out of life than the $275 he made for a six-day week at the restaurant or the $4 an hour he has earned for two years as a fast-food restaurant dishwasher on split shifts.

Now he wants to be able to read the papers his kids bring home from school for his signature.

Now, like hundreds of thousands of other immigrants in California, Villegas, 36, who taught himself to read and write Spanish, is learning how to speak, read and write the language of his adopted land.

English illiteracy among immigrants is shaping up to be the challenge of the late 20th century in California. Immigrants number in the millions in the state. Their proficiency in English varies widely, but many are undereducated and cannot speak, read or write English. Some are illiterate in their native languages.

Conservative estimates made before the passage of landmark immigration reform legislation last year placed the number of illegal immigrants in the state at 1.6 million. More than 68 percent of these undocumented immigrants cannot read English, according to a 1986 study cited by the state Department of Education.

Then there are the legal immigrants: From 1980 to 1986 an estimated 780,000 migrated to the state. These numbers do not include about 369,000 Southeast Asian refugees in California, nearly half the total number of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees who have come to this country since 1975.

As the state accepts wave after wave of immigrants and refugees to its shores, the illiteracy problem grows.

Already it outstrips the resources available in places like Los Angeles, with its vast urban cross quilt of languages and cultures.

This year more than 200,000 students will study English as a second language, also known as ESL, in the Los Angeles Unified School District, but as of late September more than 24,000 couldn't get into classes.

Across California, nearly 80 percent of the students in literacy programs — an estimated 475,000 students — are also studying English as a second language.

California school districts have told state education officials that 117,000 more immigrant students could be served if the state provided enough funds. Earlier this year, state education officials sought $21 million more to handle unmet immigrant education needs for the current fiscal year. They got $6 million.

The need will grow even greater as hundreds of thousands more seek such classes because of the new immigration law. State education officials estimate legalization programs under the new law will swell the demand for ESL classes in California by some 303,000 students during the next few years.

The costs of educating legalized aliens in English would run $41 million in the current fiscal year and $280 million over four years, according to Education Department estimates. The figures do not include education for tens of thousands of legalized farm workers who will also will need ESL training.

The federal government will provide billions of dollars in immigration impact funds to California and other states over the next four years. California's allotment is expected to total some $465 million in this fiscal year alone. A portion of that money will pay for additional ESL programs as well as added state and local expenses, such as county assistance and government medical care for legalized aliens.

Although state planners have placed a high priority on ESL education to meet immigration requirements, state and local education officials fear their share of the money will not be enough. Offering immigrants enough English to pass immigration tests will not necessarily ensure that they have the proficiency in the language to get decent jobs and otherwise participate in society, say the educators.

At the downtown Los Angeles Evans School — with a student body between 7,000 and 9,000 it is the largest adult school in the country — eight out of 10 students are learning to speak, read and write English. Most of them are foreign born and they speak nearly 50 different languages and dialects.

In late September, the school already had a waiting list of more than 3,000 students for its ESL classes.

"It is necessary to learn English in my work," said Francisca Quintinilla, one of the unlucky ones. A Salvadoran housekeeper and nanny, she had just been told by a counselor at the Evans school that she would be unable to get into an afternoon entry-level English class.

"You have to understand what people want you to do," said Quintinilla, "when the woman of the house

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> "I feel lost most of the time. People talk and I don't know what they are saying."
>
> **—Kwan Keung, immigrant from Hong Kong**

tells you what to do with the children."

In Sacramento, 350 of the 550 students at the Fremont Adult School are in ESL programs. They speak some 30 languages and are from about 36 countries. Some attend up to five classes a day.

"We're so overloaded we had to open new classes," says Phil Zachariou, coordinator of adult basic education and ESL programs at the school.

The statewide ESL student body is a vastly diverse group with vastly diverse needs. Most people are desperate to learn to speak the language, to communicate.

"I feel lost most of the time," says Kwan Keung, an immigrant from Hong Kong. He has been here for six years and operates an incense shop in the Chinatown section of Los Angeles.

"People talk and I don't know what they are saying. Sometimes I feel embarrassed. I feel I'm living here so I should know what's going on."

Reading and writing is viewed as a necessity to conduct business, to be better able to help children with their schoolwork or to understand life's paper work.

The statewide ESL student body includes professionals — doctors, lawyers, business people — who might speak some English and read and write their native tongues well. A smaller percentage are illiterate in their native tongues and in some cases come from predominately non-literate civilizations.

In fact, some classes in Los Angeles try to teach Mexican-Americans and other Hispanics to read and write in Spanish as a way of making education in English easier.

The precise method of teaching English varies from program to program. Some programs emphasize phonetics; others may begin with basic, spoken and written images and ideas. Most teachers say using the native tongue to explain English is a crutch that should be thrown away.

A teacher may grasp her arm and pronounce the word "arm" carefully. It is repeated by the class as students touch their arms. In more advanced classes, the complicated relationships of prepositions to nouns is discussed. Idioms are explained. Again there is repetition.

Adult school English classes — especially in urban centers like Los Angeles — tend to be larger than accepted norms. The average ESL class in the Evans school last year was 47 students, compared with a desired size of 30 to 35, according to Assistant Principal Carlos Delgado.

Most ESL programs — leading to basic education classes — are designed to advance a student through levels to a seventh- or eighth-grade proficiency in preparation for high school training.

A major difficulty in teaching illiterate immigrants is the need to explain U.S. culture, the ways of doing things here. In some cases — such as with non-literate Hmong people in Fresno — the very understanding of school, education, formal learning is lacking.

"I would really like to know English, but I am too old," says 51-year-old Hmong refugee Chay Kothao who has studied this country's language unsuccessfully in the past and is trying again in Fresno.

"I'm too old and my brain is no good," says Kothao an illiterate former rice farmer living on welfare Speaking in his native tongue, he echoes a feeling that other Hmong his age share.

"It's very hard for me. I don't know anything (about working) with papers and bills," Kothao says.

Friends and social workers help, but he feels bad Once a family provider, he now only cleans and cooks around the house. Without English he cannot find a good job.

More than other places, Fresno County faces a challenge in educating some 30,000 Southeast Asian refugees who have settled there, turning their area into a refugee camp without walls.

More than half of the 3,000 students at the Fresno adult school are enrolled in ESL programs. Most of these students are Southeast Asian refugees. A third of the 900 literacy students served by the private Fresno Adult Literacy Council are refugees.

Some learn fast, others struggle. Their desires are a better life in their new homeland.

A Hmong woman, Mee Fang, 45, is learning English at a literacy class in her predominately Hmong apartment complex. She wants to be able to take classes in sewing when she is finished.

Kao Sia Vang, 52, a Hmong and former soldier, attends the apartment complex class because he has no quite figured out how to make it by bus to the adul school.

The biggest problem is trying to span centuries o civilization in a short period of time, says Fresno Adul School Principal Don McColm of the non-literate refugees. "These people came from a tribal civilization," he says. "The cultural shock is overwhelming."

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26-question quiz to determine literacy

About this test

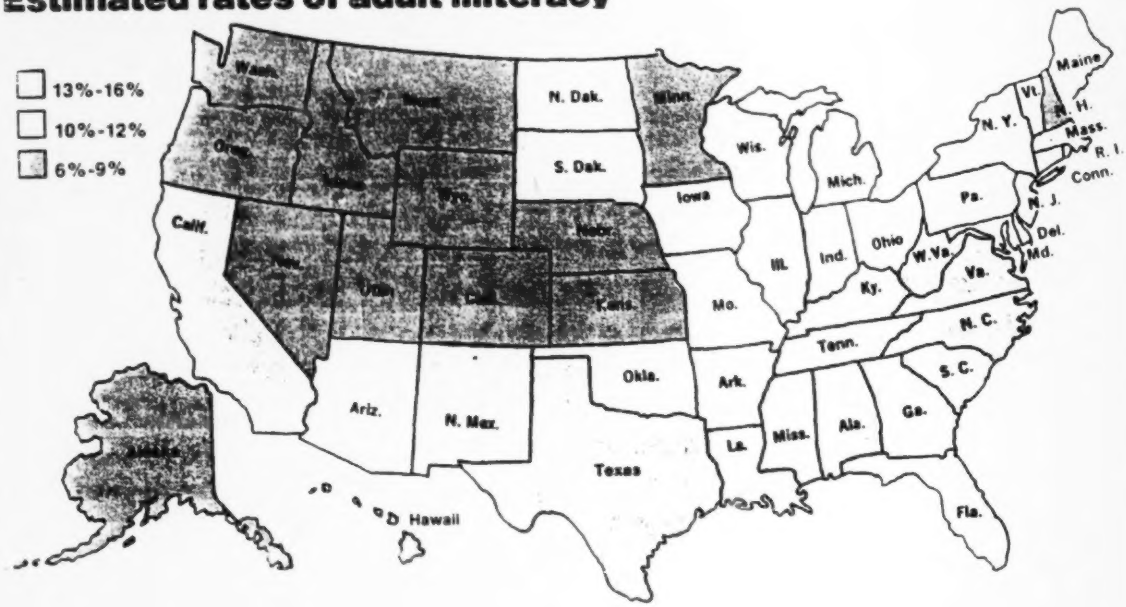
The English Language Proficiency Survey was conducted by the Census Bureau in 1982. The 26-question test of English comprehension was given to a national sample of 3,400 adults age 20 and older. The test was based on approximate fourth-grade reading, vocabulary and comprehension levels. People who missed six or more questions were considered illiterate.

The survey's results led to an estimate by the U.S. Department of Education that 13 percent of U.S. adults are illiterate. Applied to current population figures, that means at least 23 million people read at a fourth-grade level or lower.

Many literacy experts believe the number of illiterate people is much higher because the census sample did not include any prisoners or young adults aged 16 to 19.

The Department of Education and other experts further estimate that 30 million to 35 million adults are marginally literate, with reading skills between the fifth- and eighth-grade levels.

— Deb Kollars



Estimated rates of adult illiteracy

13%-16%
10%-12%
6%-9%
Wash.
Oreg.
Calif.
Wyo.
Utah
Kans.
Nebr.
N. Dak.
S. Dak.
Minn.
Iowa
Wis.
Mich.
Ill.
Ind.
Ohio
Pa.
N. Y.
Vt.
Maine
N. H.
Mass.
R. I.
Conn.
N. J.
Del.
Md.
W.Va.
Va.
Ky.
Mo.
Tenn.
N. C.
S. C.
Ga.
Ala.
Miss.
La.
Ark.
Okla.
Texas
N. Mex.
Ariz.
Fla.
Alaska
Hawaii

Directions

You will read some sentences. The sentences have a word or phrase in bold print. Choose the answer that means the same as the word or phrase in bold. Draw a line under your answer choice.

■ ■ ■

An example

I need to see your **children.**
a. stove and refrigerator
b. ID and driver's license
c. sons and daughters
d. bills and payments

Which answer means the same as children? The answer is c. Sons and daughters means the same as children. Draw a line under sons and daughters.

■ ■ ■

You will also read some problems with questions. Choose the best answer to the question. Draw a line under your answer choice.

Example

This program helps children. It gives them help in **reading and math.**

What do the children study?
a. art and reading
b. reading and math
c. math and art
d. reading and writing

What do the children study? The answer is b. Reading and math is the best answer. Draw a line under reading and math.

■ ■ ■

Multiple-choice reading

Directions

Choose the answer that means the same as the word or phrase in bold type.

1. Persons may receive benefits if they are **eligible.**
a. qualified
b. complete
c. single
d. logical

2. We cannot see you today. **When can you return?**
a. When was the last time you came?
b. Who should you call when you come?
c. On what date can you come again?
d. Are those the papers you can return?

3. The patient has the right to ask for information about his **sickness.**
a. benefits
b. business
c. expenses
d. illness

4. **Enter** your Social Security number here.
a. find
b. check
c. show
d. write

5. You may request a review of the decision made on the application or recertification for assistance and **may request a fair hearing concerning any action affecting receipt or termination of assistance.**
a. will get the service
b. must help the worker
c. must sign the application form
d. have a right to an appeal

6. This is to notify you that your application for assistance has been **denied.**
a. turned down
b. reviewed
c. accepted
d. mailed out

Directions

Choose the best answer to the question.

7. You should ask a friend or relative to help you fill out the forms if you cannot read or understand the application.
What should you do if you do not understand the questions on the application form?
a. Answer all the questions by writing "None."
b. Return the application unsigned.
c. Write to the notary public.
d. Ask a friend or relative to help you.

8. We cannot file your application or determine if you are eligible for assistance until we receive both of your completed, signed and dated forms.
Which of the following may be a reason for your application not being filed?
a. Application was not notarized.
b. Application had too many answers with "no" or "none."
c. Application was not signed.
d. Application was received too late.

Directions

You will read some paragraphs. Some of the words are missing. Read all the paragraph first. Then read the paragraph again. Choose the best word or phrase to complete the sentence. Draw a line under your answer choice.

Example

Take this form to the main downtown office. The .... is located on the
a. it
b. office
c. address
d. apply
second floor. It is .... room 24.
a. it
b. and
c. in
d. on

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS. *You should have underlined b. office and c. in.*

■ ■ ■

Multiple choice

9. Soon you'll receive a new medical services program identification card. It will replace all other medical ....
a. bills
b. cards
c. types
d. checks

10. Before using the card you must sign ...... on the back.
a. the
b. it
c. on
d. a

11. Don't allow your medical identification card to .... by any other person.
a. be used
b. have destroy
c. go lose
d. get expired

12. If you do, you may be excluded from ....
a. this notice
b. fraud
c. attention
d. this program

13. If you .... your
a. keep
b. send
c. lose
d. chance

14. card, you should immediately get a new .... Go to the medical services
a. address
b. one
c. yours
d. chance

15. office .... this card replaced.
a. nearly
b. by it
c. in time
d. to get

16. To report medical expenses, first indicate how often you pay these expenses. Tell how long .... will be paying them. Name the persons in your
a. doctors
b. time
c. they
d. you

17. household .... these expenses are paid Penalties for fraud may
a. in that
b. by which
c. for whom
d. how often

18. include a fine, imprisonment .... for persons found guilty of obtaining
a. and then
b. in that
c. but also
d. or both

19. benefits .... they are not eligible
a. for which
b. to give
c. when others
d. very often

■ ■ ■

20. Your application for services has been received and an initial screening scheduled. At your request, a .... may be postponed
a. screening
b. people
c. regulation
d. resident

21. for a short period ....
a. for action
b. in which
c. with time
d. of time

22. The screening may be postponed until a ...... date if a good reason is given.
a. prior
b. later
c. maybe
d. having

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23. If .... fail to appear at a scheduled screening.

- a. applicant
- b. you
- c. reason
- d. disabled

24. the ....

- a. decision
- b. people
- c. application
- d. vehicle

25. will be considered withdrawn. In such cases, you will .... to refile

- a. notice why
- b. have requested
- c. find out
- d. be allowed

26. the application if within 10 .... of the scheduled screening you provide

- a. appeals
- b. people
- c. days
- d. reasons

good cause for your failure to appear

The answers

1. a
2. c
3. d
4. d
5. d
6. a
7. d
8. c
9. b
10. b
11. a
12. d
13. c
14. b
15. d
16. d
17. c
18. d
19. a
20. a
21. d
22. b
23. b
24. c
25. d
26. c

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Opening doors with reading: the blossoming of Rachel Burns

Illiteracy affects hundreds of thousands of Kentuckians every day. This is the first installment of a three-part series that explores the problem, the people it affects and the ways the issue is being addressed.

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

BURKESVILLE — Rachel Burns knows how mysterious and scary the world can be for an adult who cannot read.

For Mrs. Burns and an estimated 400,000 illiterate Kentuckians, every written word is an obstacle to be negotiated.

Street signs, warning labels, newspapers have no meaning. Even the signs identifying public restrooms are a mystery.

Mrs. Burns remembers never being sure which restroom was for women. She would wait until she saw a woman leaving one and only then would she enter it.

But the isolation and confusion of being illiterate soon will be only bad memories for Rachel Burns.

At 59, she is learning to read.

Growing up on the farm

The reason Rachel Burns cannot read is that she never had a chance to learn.

She went to school only a few times as a child in Cumberland County. The rest of the time she worked in tobacco fields.

"My dad didn't believe in people going to school. He believed in working. He didn't have no education. His kids didn't need one."

She was born Rachel Pritchard on Dec. 14, 1927, the oldest of nine children. Her parents, both illiterate, were farmers. They depended on her to help with the crops and the children.

"The first time I got cut with a double-bit ax I was 5 years old and I was cutting up wood," she said. She still has the scar.

Some of her friends went to school, but education was not a priority for many farmers. In some cases, keeping their children home to work was an economic necessity.

Rachel understood that but knew she was missing something.

Her father once allowed her and a brother to go to school but told them to come home at morning recess. Her mother said they could stay until lunch.

When they returned at lunchtime, their father was furious.

"He got rough on us," Mrs. Burns recalled. "It was awful."

She did not defy him again.

Her four youngest sisters were luckier, but none went beyond the sixth grade.

"They've all had hard lives," she said.

A wife and mother

When Rachel was 16, she married Esco Burns, 39. He, too, was illiterate. But unlike Rachel, he could not even sign his name.

"He couldn't tell a $10 bill from a $1 bill," Mrs. Burns said.

She never had problems with money or arithmetic.

The couple had eight children, but only three survived past early childhood.

"They said it was Rh-negative blood," she said. "I was poor, and I didn't have no way of going anywhere else to be doctored."

For 17 years, the Burnses were sharecroppers. They lived on a tobacco farm owned by Esco's sister, Exona Wray.

"I've known nothing but work and children ever since I was born almost," Mrs. Burns said.

But she was adamant that her children get an education.

"I never wanted my kids to have to be raised like I was. . . . I always said, from the time I was big enough to know anything, 'If I ever have a child, it will have an education. He'll never have to work like I have,' " she said.

Mrs. Burns' oldest child, Della Sheeley, 40, of Three Oaks, Mich., said her mother "really did stress education."

Della was not kept home to work. But in the summer, "I had to help her in the tobacco fields and she cried. She would do anything to see that I wouldn't have to work like that."

About this series

"Illiteracy in Kentucky" was written by **Mary Ann Roser**, who has reported on education for the Herald-Leader since September 1983. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati, she worked previously as a reporter in Northern Kentucky and Owensboro.

Roser

Judy Jones Lewis, the Herald-Leader's southeastern Kentucky reporter, assisted with the series.

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> 'I would always have someone read for me. . . . But it would have been joyful, awful good, if I could have just done it myself without having to wait for someone else maybe a day or two.'
>
> — Rachel Burns

Mrs. Burns had hoped all three of her children would finish high school. But Phillip, now 22, was the only one to graduate. Larry, now 34 and living in Michigan City, Ind., dropped out during his senior year.

"Do you want to know how that hurt?" Mrs. Burns asked.

Della quit school during her junior year in 1964 — the same year Mrs. Wray died and the Burnses were forced to move.

They went to Michigan City to live with relatives. Mrs. Burns and Della got jobs washing dishes at a truck stop.

Eventually, Della learned to be a cashier; Mrs. Burns became a cook.

For about a year, Della and Mrs. Burns supported the family. Then Della got married.

Esco Burns, almost completely deaf, could not find work, so his wife, pregnant with Phillip, became the sole breadwinner.

After the baby came, she took a job as a nurse's aide.

Coping with illiteracy

Working as a cook and nurse's aide was more demanding than farming tobacco. Mrs. Burns could not have coped without a good memory.

Della says her mother could take an order from a table of six, go back to the kitchen and fix it without making a mistake.

"To this day, I wonder how the lady did it," Della said.

At the nursing home, the head nurse taught Mrs. Burns how to chart a patient's activities by using initials.

She never tried to conceal that she could not read. To compensate, Mrs. Burns relied on her excellent memory.

Many illiterate adults take pains to avoid detection. They carry newspapers or pretend to understand written messages and then ask questions to get a clue about the meaning.

"I was never ashamed of it," Mrs. Burns said of her illiteracy. "I knew it wasn't my fault."

When she could not identify a product at the grocery store, she would ask someone. Most times she would buy familiar items or go by the picture on the label.

She learned to pick out the correct spices by copying letters from the empty box onto paper. At the store she would match the letters.

As the years went by, she developed severe back problems and arthritis that required medication. A friend would read the prescription label and explain the dosage. Mrs. Burns memorized it.

"I would always have someone read for me. . . . But it would have been joyful, awful good, if I could have just done it myself without having to wait for someone else maybe a day or two," she said.

Mrs. Burns depended on others because she did not have a choice.

Once, when the family was living in La Porte, Ind., she got lost leaving a doctor's office.

"I didn't know where in the world I was at," she said. "It was the frighteningest time. I couldn't read the signs. I didn't know what street I was on or nothing."

She found her way back to the doctor's office and asked the secretary to call a cab. She could not look up a telephone number herself.

Mrs. Burns never forgot that day more than 20 years ago. Recurring nightmares haunted her, and she still shudders at the memory of her helplessness.

There were other times when she felt helpless. She regrets that she was unable to help her children with their homework or read the Bible alone.

Almost as painful were the occasional cruel comments.

"People can treat you in a way that they make you feel like dirt under their feet. . . . They'll say, 'How do you know this? You don't have no learning.' "

A few times, people who owed her money took advantage of her. They would say: "You don't know what you're talking about. You can't read."

She encountered similar problems when she went to vote.

"They'll say, 'You can't read, so you vote for the man I tell you to, because he's the right man.' Just like I wouldn't know which one was right," she said.

"I've stayed away from a couple of elections because of it."

Once, when a man tried to buy her vote, she told him she had planned to vote for his candidate, "but since you tried to buy it, I'll vote for the other fellow."

Mrs. Burns would go into the voting booth only with someone she trusted. She would print her candidate's name on paper and make sure it matched the lever that was pulled.

Although Mrs. Burns learned to cope with her illiteracy, she was always a little afraid.

"I was always wondering if I would be able to raise the kids," she said.

Esco Burns died in 1972, leaving her with Phillip, 7, to raise alone. Della had been married since 1965; Larry was living on his own.

Mrs. Burns supported herself and Phillip with restaurant work and farming. Over the next few years, they lived in Indiana, Kentucky, Washington state and Michigan.

Going for help

Mrs. Burns has been back in Cumberland County for eight years.

Her home is Burkesville Manor, a housing complex for the elderly. Because of her arthritis and back trouble, she is no longer able to work. She lives on Supplemental Security Income.

Mrs. Burns finally has time to think of herself and her dream of learning to read the Bible.

Earlier this year she heard a radio commercial about a local reading program. She memorized the phone number and called.

Susan Lilly, the coordinator of Cumberland County's literacy council, matched Mrs. Burns with a tutor, Lois Appleby. The two women knew each other from church.

In March, the lessons began.

"I was so nervous that first day,

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it was unreal," Mrs. Burns said. "You know, I wanted to do good, and I was so afraid I wouldn't."

Said Mrs. Appleby: "I assured her that her tutor was just as nervous as she was."

Mrs. Appleby is among the county's two dozen literacy tutors. But only half that many adults are enrolled in the local reading program, Mrs. Lilly said.

Most people who cannot read are too embarrassed to confront their problem, said Mrs. Lilly and Patricia Thomas, a Burkesville lawyer who heads the literacy council.

Miss Thomas said people often came into her law office and asked for help in looking up phone numbers or with writing.

"They never say, 'I can't read.' It's 'I don't have my glasses,' 'I'm in a hurry,' or 'I get nervous writing and need you to fill something out,' " Miss Thomas said.

There are many adults like that in Cumberland County and throughout Kentucky.

A picturesque farming county, Cumberland lies in Kentucky's 5th Congressional District — home of the nation's least educated adults.

Of the county's 7,289 residents, 4,551 are over 25, according to the 1980 census. Of those, 2,792, or 61 percent, have less than an eighth-grade education.

It is not known how many of those adults are illiterate because no one gathers such statistics.

Many of them are bright but were not educated for one reason or another. Despite that, "they have learned to cope in a literate world," Miss Thomas said.

The county's literacy program receives about $5,500 from the Kentucky Literacy Commission. Tutoring is free, and students are taught in their homes to ensure privacy. Names are kept secret.

"We maintain their dignity at any and all costs," Miss Thomas said.

Learning to read

Mrs. Burns hopes her story will prompt others to learn to read.

"You don't really know what you're missing until you know how to read just a little bit," she said.

"We have people here that say, 'I'm too old,' or 'too nervous,' or too this. You never get too old to learn."

She learned the alphabet years ago and could write her name and the names of her children. She could recognize stop signs because her grandson taught her those when he was 3 years old, she said.

But now, she is reading.

Last month, on a sunny afternoon, Mrs. Burns and Mrs. Appleby reviewed a lesson.

"Mr. Oliver is fishing in the river," Mrs. Burns read. "Then he is . . . fishing? . . . has a fish?"

She paused. "What's that word?"

Mrs. Appleby told her to look at the first letter. "I know you know the word."

"I know I do, too," Mrs. Burns said. She paused, then read, "He *gets* a fish.

"He picks up his fish. He gives the fish to Ed Hill. Ed thanks Mr. Oliver for the fish."

Mrs. Appleby is proud of her student's progress.

"Rachel came up to me in the store the other day and said, 'I learned a new word today.' I said, 'OK, lay it on me,' and she said, 'H-o-u-s-e.'

"I love when she does that."

Sometimes, the lessons are frustrating and Mrs. Burns gets impatient. Other times, she throws up her hands and laughs. "I get tickled at myself sometimes," she said.

She has finished the first book in the Laubach Literacy Action series, used nationwide in adult literacy programs. After she completes three more, she can begin working on high school requirements.

To mark the first-level achievement, Mrs. Appleby gave her a certificate.

"It's been wonderful. You couldn't be a better teacher," Mrs. Burns said. Her eyes filled with tears as she hugged her tutor.

"You mean a lot to me," Mrs. Appleby said, wiping her eyes.

A new life

Since she began reading lessons, Mrs. Burns has changed. Friends say she is happier, more confident and more outgoing.

"It's so wonderful to be able to do all this stuff I used to couldn't do," she said.

Mrs. Appleby sees the difference the lessons are making.

"She's always reading something," Mrs. Appleby said. "She gets this little light in her eyes when she recognizes something. Everywhere we go she tells people she's learning to read. .She's so excited, and it excites me. We feed on each other, I think.

" . . . I love watching people blossom out."

Mrs. Burns is reading signs she never noticed before. A few weeks ago, she walked up to a statue in the courthouse yard and saw a plaque.

"Of course, there's a lot of words I didn't know," she said. "But some of them, I did, and it was a thrill just to be able to see those words.

". . . Every time I learn one it makes me feel better."

And now she can walk directly into a restroom without waiting to see if a man or woman comes out.

"It really made me feel great to walk into that place and know the difference," she said.

In many ways, reading has opened a new world to her.

"It's almost like starting over again with a new life — just like a child with her schooling."

Rachel Burns is looking forward to unraveling the mystery of words this autumn.

She's not afraid any more.

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Doing battle with the injustice of illiteracy

In 1964, Jonathan Kozol became a teacher and got a glimpse of a world he could not forget: a fourth-grade classroom in the Boston public schools.

"It was that year in Boston that I saw before my eyes a world of suffering, of hopelessness and fear, that I could never have imagined in the privileged and insulated decades of my childhood and schooling," Kozol wrote in his introduction to Illiterate America *in 1985.*

That book was a sequel to Death at an Early Age, *an account of his teaching experiences that won a 1967 National Book Award.* Illiterate America *helped launch the nation's literacy movement.*

At 51, Kozol remains an outspoken advocate for literacy. He will open the Kentucky Literacy Commission's second annual conference with a speech Wednesday in Lexington.

Kozol, who lives in the Boston area, spoke last week with Herald-Leader education writer Mary Ann Roser. Here are excerpts from the interview.

Question: Why should the public care about illiteracy?

Answer: There's a tendency to try and provide all sorts of persuasive financial reasons. It's terribly expensive. Congress has estimated that it costs us over $20 billion a year in direct expenses — welfare-related, industrial accidents, prison-related expenses.

There's also a strong appeal to be made to business. In many parts of the nation where there is serious unemployment, jobs are going unfilled because employers cannot find workers sufficiently literate.

Those are the selfish reasons.

The real reason to be concerned about illiteracy is because it represents one of the most extreme forms of injustice imaginable. In the United States we condemn the Soviet Union for prior censorship of the press, but there is no censorship so absolute as what is imposed on a non-reader.

Anyone who loves this republic and takes seriously the words of Thomas Jefferson has got to be alarmed when at least one in five Americans cannot possibly read and understand the Bill of Rights or the U.S. Constitution.

Q: You talk about illiteracy being an insult to democracy. Explain what you mean.

A: There's no free press for people who can't read it. There's no free election for a person who has no way to make a choice. There's no pursuit of happiness for someone who lives an entire lifetime in fear and trembling. Those are the basic premises of a democracy.

Q: To what extent are illiterates exploited by vote-buying?

A: It's easy for corrupt politicians to buy votes from poor people who can't read enough to vote in their self-interest. The real tragedy, however, is that most illiterates don't vote at all.

The percentage of adult citizens who vote in the United States is the lowest of any Western democracy. A lot of those people are apathetic, but most of them don't vote because they can't choose and make decisions.

How can you shape the future if you have no way to know the past?

Q: Your estimate that 60 million U.S. adults are illiterate to marginally literate has been called an exaggeration. How do you respond to that?

A: Sixty million is a conservative figure if we're talking about the numbers of people who can't . . . participate in American democracy.

One illiterate woman said to me, "If you can't read, you can't choose." Whether in a restaurant or a voting booth, you take your choices from somebody else. The standard Reagan administration answer to every serious problem that afflicts poor people in America is to deny that it exists or to insist that it is not as serious as people say.

Q: Why is there widespread illiteracy in one of the richest, most powerful nations on Earth?

A: The most important reason is we run a dual school system in the United States. Children of affluent people go to excellent schools which turn out very few non-readers. The children of poor people go to poorly funded schools with overcrowded

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classrooms and underpaid teachers. Not by coincidence, large numbers of those children grow up to be illiterate.

An obvious secondary reason is poorly educated adults cannot read to their children. ... The children who went to the worst schools had the least backup at home.

Q: In Kentucky they've organized literacy councils in nearly every county. Many are affiliated with local libraries. What do you think of that effort?

A: Those local literacy councils all over the country are an absolute blessing. The people who work in those places are the salt of the earth.

The sponsorship of the libraries is terrific. If it were not for the leadership taken by the library profession, we probably would have 5 million more illiterate people than when Reagan was elected.

Q: Is the problem of illiteracy getting worse?

A: Well, it is in two respects. First of all, the children of adult illiterates are high-risk candidates to become another generation of non-readers.

Let's take (Education Secretary) William Bennett at his rock-bottom estimate of 23 million illiterate adults. Assuming that most of those adults have two to three children, we're talking about the possibility of 46 million illiterates 10 years from now.

The second reason it's getting worse is the demands of the job place are changing so fast that people who could have made it by the strength of their arms and the sweat of their brows 10 years ago won't be able to earn a living in 1990.

Q: Who's to blame?

A: My own instinct at this point is not to spend too much time trying to find scapegoats. When you're about to hit an iceberg, you don't ask who put the iceberg there; you grab the lifeboats. What we need are a lot of lifeboats.

It's self-evident that William Bennett and the Reagan administration in general have profoundly damaged American education. ... Bennett has taken a hatchet to public education.

Q: To what extent are public schools, bad teachers and social promotions to blame for illiteracy?

A: I don't think public school teachers deserve one bit of blame. They are poorly paid, overburdened, and the most hard-working people in America.

I taught fourth grade and I taught at Yale University. The easiest job I ever had teaching was at Yale. The hardest job I ever had in my life was teaching fourth grade.

> 'What is the worth of a multibillion-dollar defense budget if we have nothing left to defend? The best defense is in the minds of our population — a strong, decision-making population.'

Q: What must be done to solve this problem?

A: We need ... a $10 billion federal program to provide adult and preschool literacy — to simultaneously teach parents so they can teach their kids. That is the only ultimate solution.

At most, the Reagan administration is spending $200 million, which comes out to about $10 per illiterate. Ten billion dollars is the price of two B-1 bombers.

What is the worth of a multi-billion-dollar defense budget if we have nothing left to defend?

The best defense is in the minds of our population — a strong, decision-making population.

Q: You talk about this $10 billion. The chances of that happening appear so slim.

A: That's not true at all. I think it's very important that we not operate from the demoralized sense of hopelessness that has been engendered by the past seven years.

Many decent Americans have become accustomed in the Reagan years to accepting the crumbs off the table. This is not in the real American tradition. There's a great American tradition of mobilizing our national wealth to address a national problem.

I'm not talking about $10 billion in one year. I'm talking about $10 billion in a long-term program.

Q: You advocate a huge grass-roots literacy movement.

A: Yes, energy from the bottom up. Money from the top down. ... Let the federal government give back a few of those dollars.

Q: Have you seen any signs that this country is making a dent in illiteracy?

A: There's been a grass-roots explosion sparked in large part by the literacy councils, the libraries, the book industry, newspaper publishers and ABC television.

There's a terrific momentum in the country right now, but the number of people unable to meet the rising job demands is rising faster than the numbers of people we're saving. So, we're making progress at the grass roots, but we're losing on a national scale.

There will be no answer if it is not a federal answer.

Q: What will happen if efforts to combat illiteracy fail or if the federal government doesn't do its part?

A: No. 1, we will lose all possibility of economic competition with Japan, West Germany and the Soviet bloc.

No. 2, we will see a tide of discontent rising among the poorest people in this country which will explode in crime, violence and fury on a scale worse than anything that we saw in the 1960s.

And No. 3, and most important, we will simply cease to be a democracy. ... It's an incomplete democracy when by sheer accident of birth you are denied the opportunity to learn to read.

Q: Are you optimistic this problem will be solved?

A: I'm quite convinced it's going to be solved.

The value of the literacy councils is to hold up a lantern in the middle of a black night — to show people what could be done if we had the money.

If we elect someone committed to education in 1988 and start allocating serious funds to reinforce the local literacy councils and bring back strength and health in our public schools, we'll be a literate society by the year 2000.

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Education cut short

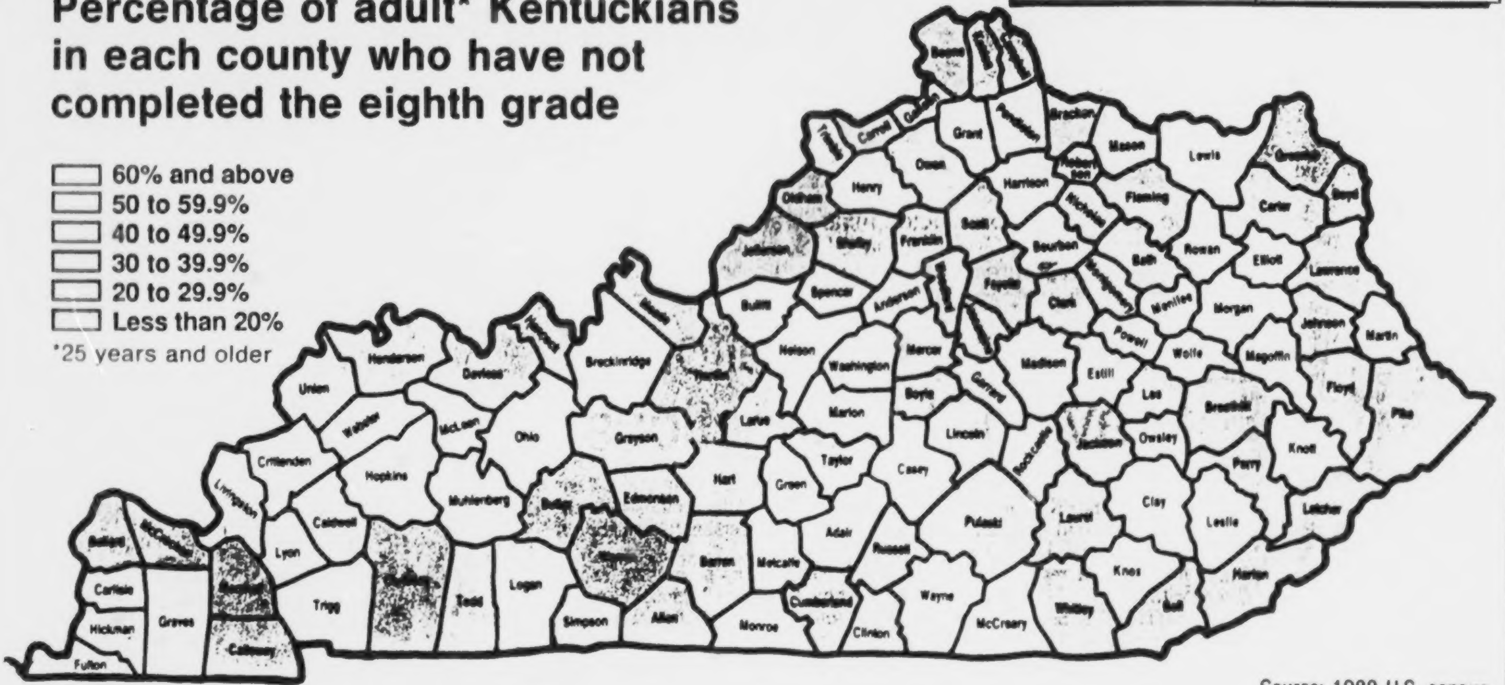
Counties with lowest/highest proportion of adults who have not completed the eighth grade

Lowest	Highest
Fayette 16%	Jackson 62%
Oldham 18%	Cumberland 61%
Boone 18%	Clay 59.9%
Jefferson 19%	Owsley 59%
Hardin 21%	Wayne 59%

Percentage of adult* Kentuckians in each county who have not completed the eighth grade

☐ 60% and above
☐ 50 to 59.9%
☐ 40 to 49.9%
☐ 30 to 39.9%
☐ 20 to 29.9%
☐ Less than 20%

*25 years and older


Boone
Kenton
Campbell
Trimble
Carroll
Gallatin
Grant
Pendleton
Bracken
Mason
Lewis
Greenup
Boyd
Oldham
Henry
Owen
Harrison
Robertson
Fleming
Carter
Jefferson
Shelby
Franklin
Scott
Nicholas
Bourbon
Bath
Rowan
Elliott
Lawrence
Bullitt
Spencer
Anderson
Woodford
Fayette
Clark
Montgomery
Menifee
Morgan
Johnson
Martin
Meade
Hancock
Henderson
Daviess
Breckinridge
Hardin
Nelson
Washington
Mercer
Jessamine
Madison
Estill
Powell
Wolfe
Magoffin
Floyd
Pike
Union
Webster
McLean
Ohio
Grayson
Larue
Marion
Boyle
Garrard
Lee
Breathitt
Knott
Crittenden
Hopkins
Muhlenberg
Butler
Edmonson
Hart
Green
Taylor
Casey
Lincoln
Rockcastle
Jackson
Owsley
Perry
Livingston
Caldwell
Lyon
Warren
Barren
Metcalfe
Adair
Russell
Pulaski
Laurel
Clay
Leslie
Letcher
Ballard
McCracken
Marshall
Carlisle
Hickman
Graves
Calloway
Fulton
Trigg
Christian
Todd
Logan
Simpson
Allen
Monroe
Cumberland
Clinton
Wayne
McCreary
Whitley
Knox
Bell
Harlan

Source: 1980 U.S. census

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400,000 Kentuckians lost in a sea of words

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

Every day in Kentucky 400,000 adults are defeated by an enemy they don't understand: the written word.

They are "functionally illiterate," unable to read well enough to function in a world of words.

They cannot fill out job applications or understand labels on prescription bottles. They cannot read a letter or the Bible. They get by with help from friends and family.

"The limits illiteracy puts on a person's enjoyment of life can't be measured," said Connie Schwein of Lexington, the literacy coordinator for Operation Read Inc. and the Fayette County schools.

"They can't pick up the funny papers and read 'The Far Side' or understand it. They can't read a book or an article in the newspaper about their neighbor. None of those things are even an option."

Illiteracy is considered one of America's gravest problems because it threatens economic competitiveness and undercuts democracy.

"We're now operating in a global market for brains," said Harry Caudill, a Whitesburg author and historian.

Although figures vary, experts estimate that one in five adults in the United States is illiterate. That amounts to about 27 million people.

Jonathan Kozol, the author of *Illiterate America*, says that 60 million Americans are illiterate or marginally literate.

However, the U.S. Census Bureau contends that 99.5 percent of Americans are literate.

"Literate," in that sense, can mean merely having the ability to write one's name, said Paul Siegel, the chief of the education branch of the Census Bureau. He added that the bureau had no idea how many millions were functionally illiterate.

A national literacy movement has emerged since Kozol's book was published in 1985. And Kentucky, with one of the highest illiteracy rates in the nation, is mobilizing literacy workers in every county.

The problem

Those workers face a long, uphill fight. Here's why:

- More than 1 million Kentuckians over the age of 25, or 46.9 percent, lack a high school diploma, according to the 1980 census. The national figure is 33.5 percent.

Many of these adults need literacy instruction.

- 650,000 adult Kentuckians, or 31.3 percent, have not completed the eighth grade, according to the census. The national figure is 18.3 percent.
- 400,000 adult Kentuckians are functionally illiterate, meaning they read below a fourth- or fifth-grade level. Ten percent of the adults in the state did not go beyond the fifth grade.

These numbers do not reveal the personal tragedies or wasted potential of illiterate adults.

Although illiterates come from every class and race, the majority are poor.

Most often, illiterates are found in low-paying jobs, unemployment lines, soup kitchens and prisons. Low self-esteem and dependency are common traits.

"Their life choices are very limited. The best way I think you can define illiteracy is an absolute limitation of choices," said Patricia Gleich, the executive director of the Kentucky Literacy Commission.

Many of them are too ashamed to admit that they cannot read. They do not seek out literacy programs.

Illiterates also have problems participating in a democracy.

An illiterate person cannot write to a congressman or analyze a candidate's platform.

Moreover, political corruption can easily flourish in communities with high illiteracy levels.

"Vote-buying and use of patronage thrive where there's limited employment opportunities and limited education. They feed on one another," said Robert Sexton of Lexington, the executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

"You will see across the nation a correlation between the quality of government and the educational attainment of the citizens," Sexton said.

"In Kentucky we have low voter participation and a lot of acceptance of unacceptable political behavior, which grows partly from tradition. ... People often just don't demand very much from their elected officials."

Causes

There are many reasons why Kentuckians are undereducated.

A look at Kentucky history holds some clues.

Beginning in the 1760s, pioneers headed westward from Virginia and the Carolinas. It took four generations to cross "that almost impassible mountain" between Virginia and Kentucky, Caudill said.

And many of those who settled the Kentucky wilderness were illiterate.

In Kentucky's early years of statehood, schools were practically non-existent, mainly because of the state's rugged geography and sparse population.

"Schools were not the first item on life's list for them. The first item was survival," Caudill said.

In addition, Kentucky was largely agricultural. Education was not seen as necessary.

"It didn't take a lot of education to drive a mule behind a plow or do logging work," said historian Thomas D. Clark of Lexington.

Many illiterate parents did not want their children to "get above their raising."

"If the child could come home from school and recite stories and read, they (the parents) felt resentful and inferior," Caudill said.

And when parents do not support education, their children are unlikely to cherish it, he said. That is why illiteracy is perpetuated from one generation to the next.

These same parents resist paying taxes for schools. And because Kentucky is such a poor state, anti-tax sentiment has been strong.

"Over and over again, a governor would urge the legislature to strengthen the school revenue laws, but the legislature wouldn't act because they didn't feel most people could afford to pay higher taxes," said Caudill, a former state representative.

Only in the last few decades has Kentucky had decent roads in the mountains and a way for children to get to school more easily.

Even so, many never finished high school.

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In 1940, only 16 percent of Kentucky adults had graduated from high school, compared with 24 percent nationwide.

"Now we're trying to go back and retrieve those generations that were lost to illiteracy," Sexton said. "We're starting with an incredible deficit."

High dropout rates also add thousands of undereducated people to the pool of functional illiterates. More than a third of Kentucky students who start ninth grade drop out before they finish high school.

Unless dramatic measures are taken to reduce dropout rates and educate adults, Kentucky is likely to rank last again in high school diplomas in the 1990 census, Sexton said.

In an age of fierce competition for jobs, no state wants to be last.

The days are gone when a strong back was the major requirement for a job.

Kentucky now is primarily a manufacturing and service industry state.

"The modern economy requires adaptability and change," Sexton said, "and to adapt and change, you have to be literate."

Who's to blame?

Like many of society's problems, there is more than enough blame to go around when it comes to illiteracy.

Kentucky education leaders and historians say schools, parents, politicians and the public must share responsibility.

"I blame businesses for accepting it, newspapers for not bearing more responsibility, the public for accepting it, politicians for not being willing to stand up and be counted, administrators for not forcing the issues, and parents for not raising hell with the local school," said Kenneth Johnstone, the executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators.

"Just about every part of our society has some blame. And it's going to take all of us to correct it."

Schools must stop promoting unqualified students, overemphasizing athletics and assigning teachers to classes outside their fields, Johnstone and others said.

Kentucky also has been hampered by unskilled governors, destructive regionalism, isolation, lack of a two-party system, low voter participation and weak legislatures, Sexton said.

"We're talking about cycles and traditions. Unemployment, poverty and illiteracy all go hand in hand," Sexton said.

Solutions

In the last two years, literacy councils have formed in almost every county in Kentucky. They exist on shoestring budgets, receiving $4,000 to $9,000 annually from the Kentucky Literacy Commission. Private fund raising supplements their budgets.

Interestingly, every county in Kentucky had a literacy council in 1917, said Harold Rose, a professor of education at Morehead State University.

"I guess the priorities of the state changed," he said.

Gov. Martha Layne Collins has had some success in improving education during the last four years, but those efforts must continue to be funded, even if it means raising taxes, he said.

"Somebody has to be willing to sacrifice their political career. I believe that's what it comes down to," he said.

Kozol, the author of *Illiterate America*, thinks grass-roots efforts can turn the tide against illiteracy.

In Kentucky during 1986-87, more than 5,000 volunteers donated $1 million worth of free time as tutors and literacy helpers, Ms. Gleich said. That same year there were 4,874 adult reading students.

In addition, preschool programs to give disadvantaged students a fighting chance to succeed in school are imperative, education leaders said.

"We're in a situation right now, if we don't do it (tackle illiteracy) in the next four to six years, we're going to leave this state high and dry," Clark, the historian, said. "Other states are going to forge ahead in training people to take the jobs in this technological society.

"To me, personally, it's frightening. . . . These folks who are functionally illiterate will be washed away. If we're last in 1990, we're going to be sweeping a lot of floors as janitors and washing a lot of dishes."

5th-grade reading sample

Here is an example of writing at the fifth-grade reading level. A person unable to read and comprehend the sample usually would be considered functionally illiterate.

> *High in the hills they came to a wide ledge where trees grew among the rocks. Grass grew in patches and the ground was covered with bits of wood from trees blown over a long time ago and dried by the sun. Down in the valley it was already beginning to get dark.*

— From "Oral Reading Criterion Test," Copyright 1971, Jamestown Publishers, Providence, R.I. Used by permission.

Illiteracy terms and numbers

Illiterate people do not fit into neat categories.

Rather, they range from the person who cannot read or write at all to those who function at a marginal level.

Here are some of the more common definitions and numbers:

Illiteracy: The inability to read or write.

No one knows exactly how many people in Kentucky or the nation are in this category.

Functional illiteracy: The inability to read or write well enough to function in everyday situations. It often is described as reading below a fourth- or fifth-grade level.

Literacy advocates estimate that anywhere from 23 million to 60 million Americans are in this category. Among them are about 400,000 Kentuckians.

Marginal literacy: The ability to "pass" functional literacy tests. These people lack a high school education.

About one-third of the U.S. adult population is in this category.

Still to come

Monday: The consequences of illiteracy. Thousands of Kentuckians are unable to make the most of their lives because they can't read.

Tuesday: The solutions. A look at some of the people who are teaching adult Kentuckians to read.

Where to call

If you want to learn to read or help someone learn, contact the adult reading program in your community. The telephone number is available toll-free from these sources:

Kentucky Literacy Commission — **1-800-654-7323**

Kentucky Department of Education — **1-800-372-7179**

Kentucky Educational Television — **1-800-432-0951**

THE LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER
September 20, 1987

Illiterates' plight a hidden danger to themselves, society

Illiteracy in Kentucky:
The Consequences

Second of three parts

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

A Lexington man who could not read had to change his eating habits when he became diabetic. He memorized a day's sample menu and ate the same breakfast, lunch and dinner — for 10 years.

Another illiterate Kentucky man installed an exhaust fan at a manufacturing plant to control toxic fumes. He installed the fan improperly, causing the fumes to blow back in. A roomful of workers became ill.

A Henry County construction worker who could not read brought a sack lunch to eat on his construction job. His co-workers pointed out that he had bought a can of cat food instead of tuna.

These true stories — told by a Lexington dietician and Patricia Gleich, the executive director of the Kentucky Literacy Commission — depict just a few of the consequences of illiteracy.

They demonstrate that a person's inability to read and write can affect not only the individual but also society as a whole. And although illiteracy often is a hidden problem, its consequences are widespread and costly.

"It's a little bit like 'for whom the bell tolls.' It tolls for all of us," Ms. Gleich said. "Each person who cannot fulfill their capabilities hurts everyone else."

Take, for example, the illiterate person driving on strange roads alone. Every year in Kentucky thousands of driver's licenses are given to adults who cannot read, said Capt. Charles Hargis, the commander of the driver testing section for the Kentucky State Police.

These non-readers take an oral test, and if they pass, they are on their own.

Hargis said he did not know how many traffic accidents and fatalities were the result of illiteracy because it was not noted on police reports.

But, he said, "There's no doubt in my mind the highways are more dangerous because they can't read the road signs."

Non-readers can also pose safety risks in the workplace. Operating equipment and mixing chemicals can be dangerous not only for an illiterate person but also for co-workers.

At home, illiterate adults sometimes have problems administering medicine to themselves and their children.

An Owensboro man who had an upset stomach went to the drugstore to buy

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Alka-Seltzer. Instead he bought Polident and ended up in the emergency room, Ms. Gleich said.

The mishap prompted the man to enroll in a reading program.

At the Fayette County Health Department, nurse practitioner Linney Toney frequently sees the consequences of illiteracy.

"We have a lot of problems with teen-age parents who can't read or can't comprehend what they read," she said.

She said young mothers had brought in their babies with severe vomiting and diarrhea, only for the nurses to discover that the women had used concentrated formula without diluting it.

Mrs. Toney also told of a woman in her 60s who had accumulated many pills from various trips to the doctor. Each day she was taking three different diuretics, which increase the flow of urine, and eventually the potassium in her body reached a dangerously low level.

"She reached a point where she had problems getting out of bed," Mrs. Toney said.

Social service and health care workers often are hampered in their efforts to help illiterates because many are too ashamed to admit they cannot read.

As a result, the health department hands out pamphlets written on a fifth-grade reading level and filled with pictures, said Carolyn Dennis, a nutritionist and diabetes educator.

"With everyone we use lots of pictures, lots of teaching aids and examples. We always try to discuss them," Ms. Dennis said.

In addition to health care, illiterates have difficulty exercising their rights and participating in a democracy.

Ms. Gleich told of an illiterate London woman who was getting divorced and unknowingly signed away everything she owned to her husband.

Adult non-readers also have trouble voting. Many do not vote because they cannot make informed choices.

There are many exceptions.

"It's fascinating to meet people who have earned lots of money and have been successful and can't read well enough to get by," said Connie Schwein, the literacy coordinator for the Fayette County public schools and Operation Read Inc.

Although some enjoy great success in business, the majority are poor. And even the brightest and most ingenious among them can become trapped in low-paying jobs.

Illiterates also can be found in unemployment lines, on public assistance rolls and in prisons.

Jonathan Kozol, author of *Illiterate America*, estimates that 60 percent of all prison inmates in the United States are illiterate.

"The prison population represents the single highest concentration of adult illiterates," Kozol says. He estimates that the cost of maintaining these 260,000 illiterate inmates is $6.6 billion a year.

In the workplace, illiteracy can mean "higher absenteeism, more accidents, less ability to promote," Ms. Gleich said.

Literacy advocates estimate that illiteracy costs society more than $220 billion a year in lost industrial productivity, wages, tax revenues, welfare, poverty and crime.

The direct cost to business and taxpayers is about $20 billion a year, Kozol said in a recent interview.

Carman St. John Hunter and David Harman, authors of *Illiteracy in the United States*, say the proportion of welfare recipients with fewer than six years of school is almost four times greater than that of people with nine to 11 years of schooling.

Kentucky social workers and caseworkers have become so concerned about the large number of illiterate and semiliterate clients that they have proposed doing something about it, said Brad Hughes, spokesman for the state Cabinet for Human Resources.

As a result, the cabinet is completing work on a plan for its workers to refer undereducated adults to learning programs in their communities, Hughes said last week.

Kentucky does not keep statistics on illiterates seeking welfare, social services and employment services, Hughes said.

But, he added, "we don't need to see numbers to know that we have a big problem."

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Struggling with roadblocks in the workplace

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

VERSAILLES — Since he left school at age 16 more than 30 years ago, Lee McKinney has found many doors closed to him.

McKinney, who lives in Millville, never learned to read in school, but he quickly learned that illiteracy held him back.

"There's a lot of jobs that I know I could do, but the schooling keeps me from getting better jobs," he said.

Now, at age 47, McKinney makes a good living working for Texas Instruments in Versailles. He is learning to read and eventually wants to finish what he quit 30 years ago.

But he knows an education could have made a big difference in his life and saved him some painful rejections.

"What I would have loved to have done was be a bulldozer operator or drive a truck. You have to take tests to do those things," he said.

He knew he could not pass the tests, so he did not try. That would have meant setting himself up to fail, and McKinney had more than his share of failures in school.

"Back when I was going to school, they didn't have special classes like they do nowadays. I was a slow learner, and the teacher, she'd teach the smart ones and said it would take too long for me to learn," he said.

McKinney, the eighth of 10 children — none of whom graduated from high school — was passed on, nonetheless. He dropped out during his freshman year at the former Versailles High School.

"I couldn't learn nothing. I just figured I was wasting my time and the teacher's time," he said.

After he left school, McKinney farmed and worked at construction jobs. Later, he sought work in factories.

Once, in 1959, he went to a manufacturing plant in Dayton, Ohio, to apply for a job.

"We went into a room that had desks and things in it like a big classroom. A guy came in and had a loudspeaker. He said, 'Whoever doesn't have a high school diploma shouldn't bother applying.' About half of us got up and walked out," McKinney said.

The experience was imbedded in his memory. He was rejected for several other jobs. His dreams were evaporating, and McKinney felt angry.

"It makes you mad when you can't get a job like that," he said. "There's a job in factories that I could have done if I could have had a chance to do them."

In 1960, he tried to enlist in the military but failed the written test. Again, he was rejected.

During the rest of that decade, he tried to get factory jobs in Georgetown and Lexington, but it was the same everywhere. He could not fill out the application or he was not qualified because he could not read.

McKinney learned to keep his illiteracy a secret. Insults from others "make you feel about this big," he said, holding a thumb and index finger an inch apart.

So, if someone handed him a note, he would pretend to read it.

"I'd hand it back to them and kind of laugh and go on. That's the only thing I could do," he said.

In 1969, McKinney got lucky. He was hired by the Texas Instruments plant in Versailles, which makes pressure switches and thermostats.

Four of his sisters worked at the plant, and one filled out his application. The managers did not know he could not read, and McKinney did not make an issue out of it.

"I guess I wouldn't be working at TI if I didn't have all those sisters there," he said.

In his job, McKinney shapes metal under extreme heat into parts for thermostats. He can read the numbers on the heat gauges and has not had any serious accidents.

McKinney "catches on very quick" and "you only have to show him one time," said George Adams, his supervisor for the last few months.

"He's very hardworking and conscientious," Adams said. "I didn't know that he couldn't read."

No one mentioned reading to McKinney until last fall, when Earle Johnson, the personnel administrator, approached him.

Johnson, 58, was watching Kentucky Educational Television one night when he saw lessons for a General Educational Development certificate, a substitute for a high school diploma.

He surveyed plant workers and was startled to learn that one-third of the 700 employees did not have a high school diploma.

"I come from New England, and up there people hold a high school diploma in pretty high esteem," he said.

Johnson launched a low-key crusade to get the employees involved in education programs.

"We're kind of trying to turn the button on, so to speak, but not necessarily for TI, but for the individuals themselves," Johnson said.

If plant workers were better educated, Johnson could promote them instead of going outside to hire technicians. "That should be a normal progression for somebody coming through" the plant, he said.

More and more, "there is a demand for a higher level of skill and capability," Johnson said. "We've got to be prepared for that."

The United States must try to recapture its leadership in business competition, and it will not succeed until its workers are better educated, he said.

While talking with employees for his GED survey, Johnson found six who acknowledged that they could not read.

McKinney was one of them.

Another was Eugene Devine, who has worked mostly as a janitor at the plant.

McKinney, Devine and the four other employees enrolled in reading classes with the Woodford County Literacy Council.

McKinney said he appreciated Johnson for taking an interest in him. No one had done that before, he said.

Devine, 61, said he wished he could have learned to read earlier in life, but he was not sure he would stay with the lessons.

"I'm too old now. I don't have anything to accomplish for myself now. It don't make any difference now," he said.

McKinney feels differently. Now that he has begun to read, he is thinking about the possibility of a promotion, eventually reading a newspaper and the Bible, and following a manual to overhaul an engine.

One day he hopes to get a GED certificate.

"I'll probably be 100 years old by then, but I'll have that piece of paper."

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September 21, 1987

A high price: falling between the cracks and into prison

By Mary Ann Roser

Herald-Leader education writer

DANVILLE — Betty Kelsey knows about the costs of illiteracy. She knows them by name and identification number.

Mrs. Kelsey is the principal of the school at Northpoint Training Center, a medium-security state prison with about 700 inmates.

Some of the inmates cannot read. Others are sharpening reading and math skills. The rest are aiming for a high school diploma.

They all come to Mrs. Kelsey's school for help.

"We tell them they can ... lie in their bunks and pass their time that way and go out just like they came in," she said.

"Or they can come ... to school and they can learn all they can learn while they're here."

The prisons in Kentucky and throughout the United States are filled with illiterate adults.

Jerry Wilson, the educational program administrator for the state Corrections Cabinet, estimates that three-fourths of the 4,850 inmates in Kentucky's 10 state prisons lack a high school diploma.

About one-third of those read below a sixth-grade level, he said.

"These are the forgotten ones," said Mrs. Kelsey, a former Danville High School English teacher. "They were bypassed in public schools. They fell between the cracks. ...

"Some of them may have gotten passed on when they shouldn't have been."

Twenty-three Northpoint inmates are enrolled in the literacy program, which is voluntary.

One of the most eager reading students is Clyde Fields, said his teacher, Sherman Hill.

In class one recent afternoon, Fields read several stories aloud to Hill and easily answered questions about them.

Fields, who was convicted of murder in 1980, was classified as a non-reader when he began the program 2½ years ago. Now, at age 49, he is reading on a fourth-grade level, Hill said.

"The school is wonderful for the men," Fields said. "It's done miracles for most of them in here."

In another corner of the room, the sun streamed through the window bars. An inmate tutored two other prisoners. They were working on vowel sounds.

"Spell 'sale,' " the tutor said.

The two young men hunched over their papers.

"I've got it," one said. "S-a-l-e."

"Give me the meaning," the tutor said.

"Like you catch something on sale in the store."

"Right," said the tutor.

Prison education programs, like literacy programs for adults on the outside, can give inmates success — sometimes for the first time in their lives, Mrs. Kelsey said.

"We feel like we're helping him to stay out once he's released," Mrs. Kelsey said, adding that she would like more inmates to enroll.

"I'm a firm believer that if you teach a man to read, he won't turn to crime."

Where to call

If you want to learn to read or help someone learn, contact the adult reading program in your community. The telephone number is available toll-free from these sources:

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Going on to college but back to the basics

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

In her darkest moods, Judy Cheatham sometimes wonders whether a high school diploma means anything anymore.

She has reason to wonder.

For the last four years, she has been teaching a remedial writing class at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond. Some of her students read below a fifth-grade level and are considered "functionally illiterate."

All have high school educations, and some were "B" students. But many left school unable to fill out job applications, she said.

They ended up in one of Mrs. Cheatham's classes because they wanted to try college but scored less than a 9 on the English part of the American College Test.

The average ACT score in Kentucky is 18 out of a possible 36 points, according to Gary Cox, the executive director of the state Council on Higher Education.

"I don't think they should get out of elementary school if they can't read or write," Mrs. Cheatham said.

One student in her afternoon class, Thomas Powell, 35, dropped out of Powell County High School in the 10th grade. It was 1970, and Powell was 18.

Powell said he had spent three years in the eighth grade — "part of that was my fault" — but he was a "B" student in high school. Even so, he was not learning much and only later did he get a General Educational Development certificate.

"If they (the teachers) thought you were from a poor background, they would tell you something once or half explain it. You either picked it up or you didn't," Powell said.

"I got to a point where I didn't care whether I done anything or not."

> 'I don't think they should get out of elementary school if they can't read or write.'
>
> — Judy Cheatham

Powell made a 5 in English on the ACT and had a 10 on the composite score, which included math, science and social studies.

Now a freshman, Powell is taking three remedial classes and one psychology course. He hopes to become a nurse.

He wrote about his EKU instructors in a paper for Mrs. Cheatham's class:

"The Teachers I have met have been very nice and helpfull to me. The teachers try to explain thier classes much better. The ones in High School didn't seam to care weather or not you learnd anything."

Mrs. Cheatham said Powell was working hard and progressing.

He is like many of the 80 students Mrs. Cheatham teaches. They fell through the cracks in public education. Most were promoted when, in the opinion of many educators, they should not have been.

More than 600 students are in remedial, or "developmental," courses at Eastern, said Jack Culross, the dean of academic support and undergraduate study.

All of Kentucky's public universities and community colleges offer some remedial programs, Cox said.

Mrs. Cheatham, 35, thinks teachers, parents and the public must share some of the blame for poorly prepared students.

"There are some teachers who don't have any business in the classroom," she said.

At the same time, overcrowded classes have made it difficult for teachers to devote attention to every child, she said. Other times, teachers are assigned to classes outside their fields.

Moreover, the public has expected schools to solve every social ill. And parents have pressured teachers to pass their children, she said.

Kenneth Johnstone, the executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, said he thought efforts under way in Kentucky schools would alleviate some of the problem.

Smaller classes, greater emphasis on academics and new programs that emphasize writing are helping, he said.

But reading probably should be taught in every grade rather than ending after elementary school, he said.

And teachers must try new approaches to reach students who do not respond to traditional methods, he said.

Mrs. Cheatham, who is working on a doctorate in linguistics, agrees.

"When you're trying to educate everyone, you're going to have to realize people learn in different ways. . . . If you try to just use one or two methods on a class that might have IQs ranging from 85 to 145, there's a big problem there," she said.

A native of Columbia, Tenn., she taught high school in Tennessee and Virginia and found plenty of students who could not read or write. She also had college freshmen in Virginia, Arkansas and Mississippi who were no different from the ones at EKU.

Now she is trying to help her students pick up what they should have learned years ago. By forcing them to work hard and by encouraging them, she is hoping to give them the tools to be successful in college.

"I'm the cheerleader," she said. "That's a big part of my job."

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The faces of literacy

Carl Shannon

Carl Shannon knows the car wash business inside out. If the equipment breaks down, Shannon can fix it. If productivity is off, he knows how to increase it.

But if a customer wants to pay with a credit card, Shannon needs someone else to take care of it.

Shannon, who manages Richmond Road Car Wash in Lexington, cannot read or write much. But he is learning.

Throughout adulthood, Shannon, 41, has relied on his wits to cope with his inability to read. He learned to tell restaurants and stores apart by the shapes and colors of the signs.

He also learned to hide his illiteracy.

In school, "you feel like you're an outcast," he said. "You'd hear someone say, 'He can't read.' You get self-conscious.

"Then you get older, and you learn to put yourself in situations where people won't know. You just don't mention it. ... I had friends of mine for years who didn't know."

If he was in a restaurant, he would scan the menu and then order a hamburger. He chose familiar restaurants or ones that had menus with pictures.

He had no problem earning a living.

As manager of the car wash, Shannon earns almost $22,000 a year, and his boss, Ed Mills, is pleased with his work.

It was Mills who heard about Operation Read Inc. and urged Shannon to enroll. Shannon was reluctant but agreed to try it.

"I'm at the age when I'm not trying to read for work or anything, because I'm not bothered at work," he said.

What bothered him was his inability to read to his 7-year-old daughter, Carleen.

After six months of lessons, Shannon has made much progress, said his tutor, A.J. Brignull, an engineer at IBM-Lexington.

"The first two times, you don't feel comfortable," Shannon said. "You feel bad because you don't know (how to read) at your age."

But once he got to know Brignull and the other tutors, he began to enjoy the lessons.

"In my case I could see the difference in three or four visits. I could tell I was going up the ladder instead of down the ladder for a change."

Mills sees a difference in Shannon, too.

"All of a sudden, he had confidence in himself that he could do it," Mills said.

Shannon wants to keep up with Carleen.

In three months, he was able to learn enough to do first-grade work, he said.

"It made me feel good that I could sit down and help my little daughter with her homework. That means more to me than anything."

— Mary Ann Roser

Lillian Napier

"Dear Mrs. McDonald: I have learned how to read and write. Now I am feeling like I am able to get me a job. I have been out of high school for about four years now and I didn't know how to read and write."

This is how Lillian Napier began her letter last month to Alice McDonald, the superintendent of public instruction, describing her experience in high school.

Miss Napier graduated in 1984. This year, at age 22, she is learning to read and write.

"But you know what, they wouldn't ever hold me back when I was in high school. They passed (me) on to just get me out of there. Do you want to know something else? They knew that I didn't know how to read."

Miss Napier's problem started in first grade, when she did not get along with her teacher. In second grade, the teacher read a sentence to her and asked her to read it back. Miss Napier has a good memory and simply recited the sentence without reading it. She repeated the second grade, then was promoted. By the third grade, she was hopelessly behind.

She faked her way through D.C. Combs Memorial High School in Perry County.

"When teachers would ask me to read, I started cutting up in class, and they would start yelling at me, and then they didn't ask me to read," she said recently.

Eventually she was placed in special education classes, where teachers read to her.

After graduation, Miss Napier could not find a job, because she could not fill out an application. This year, she decided to do something about it.

Miss Napier says she thinks many people with high school diplomas are illiterate.

"There's a lot of them, but most people are too bashful. They don't want people to know they can't read," she said.

In March she enrolled in an adult reading program in Hazard that uses computers, and already it has paid off. Miss Napier is looking for a part-time job and is learning to type her resume. She is losing weight, improving her appearance and thinking about herself in a more positive way.

"Now I feel a whole lot better. More self-confidence in myself now than I had in my whole life."

She hopes to enroll in an office skills course at Hazard's vocational school and eventually become a secretary.

"If it wasn't for this class, I wouldn't be able to read or write right now.

"It sure helped me. Look what I am doing now. I am able to write you this letter. I couldn't before I started this class. Now just look at me.

Thank you very much.
Yours truly,
Lillian Napier"

— Judy Jones Lewis

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Otto Fields

ANNVILLE — Reading came easy for Otto Fields, so easy that he learned to read his first-grade primer on his first day of school.

As a child growing up in Jackson County, Fields was so absorbed by books that he quickly surpassed his peers in school.

At age 11, he enrolled as a freshman at Annville Settlement School, a private school. But Fields' fast-paced learning was cut short when he enrolled the next year in a public high school.

Bored and unchallenged, he was a 10th-grade dropout at age 12.

Fields lived away from the county for 32 years and worked at a plant in Hamilton, Ohio.

But Fields never lost his desire to go home and give something back to his community. He returned in 1982 and found a way to do that.

Fields has been coordinator of programs for adults at the Silver Dollar Appalachian Communities for Children center in Annville for a year. Education programs are the center's main thrust — from literacy programs to high school equivalency work.

The adults feel comfortable coming to the center, Fields said.

James D. VanHoose

Otto Fields shares his love of reading as a tutor.

For those who cannot get to any of three community centers in the county, literacy tutoring is done in their homes — anything to make the students feel comfortable, Fields said.

There is much work to be done.

Jackson County has the state's highest proportion of adults without an eighth-grade education — 62 percent.

"People are waking up," Fields said. More and more employers in the area have put out the word that they will not hire people without a diploma.

But many county residents must first be taught to read.

Fields, 54, has been trained as a reading tutor and is ready to share his love of reading with others.

— **Mary Ann Roser**

Angie Krusenklaus

It was at the Kentucky State Fair in August that the problems of illiterates came alive for Angie Krusenklaus.

Mrs. Krusenklaus, the director of adult and outreach programs at Kentucky Educational Television, was staffing a booth at the fair.

About 280 people stopped by to pick up information. Some stayed long enough to tell their stories.

One visitor was a truck driver in his 20s. He told Mrs. Krusenklaus that he needed to learn to read.

"That's when I realized illiteracy was such a hidden problem," she said.

"He said the road signs were getting harder and harder for him to understand and read. . . . He was getting nervous about it."

Mrs. Krusenklaus referred him to a literacy program in his community. She also is sending him information about KET's "Learn to Read" series.

The 30-lesson series, designed to bring people up to a fifth-grade reading level, will begin airing again in November. KET distributes the program nationally and has been a leader in televised adult education programming.

Since the state fair, Mrs. Krusenklaus has become an even stronger advocate for literacy programs.

"When you actually talk to someone who needs help, they're not a number anymore," she said.

In her job, she is helping to coordinate other literacy activities, including Project Literacy U.S., or PLUS, a national media project undertaken by PBS and ABC.

KET is working with the Kentucky Literacy Commission on a PLUS business breakfast that will be Oct. 21.

In addition, KET, in partnership with the Herald-Leader, has developed "Tutoring With TV and Newspapers: A Literacy Resource Guide."

KET also airs "Another Page," which has reading and life-coping skills for adults reading at a fifth- to seventh-grade level; "GED on TV," which provides instruction for adults working on a General Educational Development certificate; and a training program for literacy tutors called "Teach an Adult to Read."

KET will provide free booklets, courtesy of the Herald-Leader, for all 30 literacy lessons. People can call KET to be screened and referred to the program most appropriate for them. The network's toll-free number is (800) 432-0951.

— **Mary Ann Roser**

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Charles Sebastian

HAZARD — Charles Sebastian returned to teaching last year after two decades, lured by an unusual computer system that helps teach illiterate adults to read.

"I've gotten a little wiser over the years," Sebastian said about his teaching experience. "I like to do things differently."

The use of a computer to teach reading is uncommon but appealing because it allows non-readers to work at their own pace, even if they did not know the alphabet, he said. Many non-readers are talented with machines. Computers, unlike some people, do not pass judgment, he said.

Melvin Long enrolled in the computer program at Hazard State Vocational-Technical School and has already improved his reading ability by three grade levels.

> 'I love electronics. I have a ham radio at home, and my brother has an IBM PC at his office that I work. I just can't read.'
>
> — Melvin Long

"I love electronics. I have a ham radio at home, and my brother has an IBM PC at his office that I work. I just can't read," said Long, 37.

The non-reader operates the computer by touching squares of color on the screen itself, a method developed by International Business Machines Corp. Called Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System, or PALS, the program is being tested at four sites in Kentucky, including Hazard.

The others are the Newport Adult Learning Center, the Kentucky State Reformatory at LaGrange and DuValle Education Center in Louisville.

Non-readers sit at a terminal where they read and see pictures telling the story of Smart Martin and Black Olive. The two characters help avert a fictitious war by developing written language. The lesson to be learned is the value of reading and writing.

After following their adventures for a while, the computer flashes a keyboard on the screen, which corresponds to the student's actual keyboard.

Instead of letters, the screen's keyboard has symbols. For example, an apple is pictured where the letter "A" is on a keyboard. The computer says "aah" and asks the student to repeat the same sound, type the letter "A" and write it in a workbook.

The computer will not accept the wrong answer and repeats the sound until the correct answer is typed on the keyboard.

Non-readers learn to read, write and type at the same time, Sebastian said. By the end of the 15-week course, the students will have learned to write their resumes and complete a job application.

— Judy Jones Lewis

THE LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER
September 22, 1987

The finger in the dike: 5,000 volunteers fight battle against illiteracy

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

In many ways, Kentucky's uphill battle against illiteracy depends on the efforts of 5,000 volunteers.

These volunteers, who coordinate local programs and teach adults to read, are supported by a statewide literacy commission that relies on limited state money and the generosity of businesses.

There is no question that progress has been made and people are rallying behind the issue, literacy officials said. But they also acknowledge that much remains to be done.

An estimated 400,000 Kentucky adults are considered functionally illiterate, unable to cope in everyday situations where reading is required. But only 4,800 of them, or 1.2 percent, are involved in literacy programs.

Nothing short of an all-out crusade that involves many more people and more money from the state will get the job done, literacy advocates say.

"A state with a history like Kentucky's has to make a special effort," said Robert Sexton, the executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

"It can't be business as usual. Business as usual won't work. States that were where we are now have made superior efforts to pull themselves up by their bootstraps."

A place to begin fighting illiteracy is with children, said Kenneth Johnstone, the executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators.

Preschool programs for disadvantaged students and their parents, such as the Parent and Child Education program now in 12 school districts, should be expanded, Johnstone and others said. Dropout prevention programs also should be emphasized, he said.

"Those kids are not statistics. They are people, and they will become fathers and mothers," Johnstone said.

"It's catastrophic, and I think it's going to be even worse than that. When you think of the demographics and social problems our children are facing, it's frightening."

Funding to expand early childhood education and dropout programs, however, is uncertain. Budget constraints and other pressing problems in the state could make it difficult even to pay for present educational programs.

Likewise, funding for the Kentucky Literacy Commission is up in the air until the legislature approves a new budget next year.

The commission, created two years ago by Gov. Martha Layne Collins, coordinates literacy activities across the state. Since its formation, literacy councils have either sprung up or are being formed in nearly all of the state's 120 counties, said Patricia Gleich, the commission's executive director.

The commission operates on $800,000 a year, and most of that money goes to local literacy councils. Each local council receives between $4,000 and $9,000.

Counting money from other state sources and the federal government, Kentucky spends $4 million to $5 million on literacy, Gleich said. That amounts to $10 to $12.50 for each functional illiterate.

Because of their small budgets, local councils rely on private donations to pay for programs and materials, which are free to adult students.

Many businesses have pitched in to help.

General Telephone of Kentucky, for example, is encouraging employees to volunteer time to literacy programs. K mart stores have been distributing information about literacy and holding "read-a-thons" to draw attention to illiteracy.

"We certainly feel a lot of people are jumping on the bandwagon to help," said Brenda Rollins, the director of adult and community education at the state Department of Education.

Catholic nuns coordinate literacy programs in several counties. Among them are Sister Sandy Delgado, who is busy recruiting adults in Carter County; Sister Mary Cullen, who runs the literacy program in Harlan; and Sister Mary Gemma of Nazareth, who tutors five students in Nelson County.

Another positive sign is increased public awareness about illiteracy, educators said.

Ms. Gleich and Jane Beshear, the chairwoman of the state Literacy Commission, deserve credit for getting the message out in communities across the state, said Margaret Price, the director of field services for Literacy Volunteers of America.

"We're real upbeat about the progress being made in Kentucky," she said.

Kentucky is one of a few states that have state-funded literacy commissions, she said.

Collins also has been a strong literacy advocate, Gleich said. The governor invited more than 600 literacy volunteers, coordinators and students to the Governor's Mansion on Sept. 13 to celebrate Literacy Day in Kentucky. She designated September as Literacy Month.

The commission hopes the increased attention will prompt more adults to enroll in literacy programs. In some counties, tutors outnumber students.

Part of the problem is that many adults drop out of the program.

"For one thing, you're dealing with people who live, generally, on a day-to-day basis," said Joyce Gash, a Fayette County adult education teacher. "Their life is full of crises. They may be in poor health or not have transportation."

And it can take a few years of lessons before an adult is reading well enough to work on high school requirements.

Also, because of a shortage of money, most programs operate nine or 10 months — only while public schools are in session. The Department of Education and literacy advocates want them to be open year round.

"Whatever kind of recruitment methods we're using when somebody responds, we need to say, 'You can ... go down to the center this week,'" said Jim Parks, an Education Department spokesman.

Where to call

If you want to learn to read or help someone learn, contact the adult reading program in your community. The telephone number is available toll-free from these sources:

Kentucky Literacy Commission — **1-800-654-7323**

Kentucky Department of Education — **1-800-372-7179**

Kentucky Educational Television — **1-800-432-0951**

THE LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER
September 22, 1987

Tutors' labor rich with rewards

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

One is a retired project manager from International Business Machines Corp. Another operates an income-tax and bookkeeping service. One works in real estate.

They come from diverse backgrounds, but all have volunteered their time to teach someone else how to read.

"I'm not a do-gooder," said Marcy Bantel of Lexington. "It's just something I feel strongly about."

Ms. Bantel, a property manager for a real estate syndication company, and 20 other Lexington adults spent some of their free time last month at a workshop learning how to teach adults to read.

Fayette County has an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 adults thought to be functional illiterates.

"I love reading so much I wanted to help another adult learn that. It opens all kinds of worlds," said bookkeeper Chris Taylor, 61.

Ms. Taylor's reason for wanting to teach an adult to read is typical of prospective tutors. They have an appreciation of the written word and cannot imagine what life would be like without books.

"I sort of like to teach," said Chuck Edwards, 64, who is retired from IBM, where he taught a quality-control class.

The tutor instruction is intensive, and class members undergo 15 to 18 hours of training before they get their first students.

In Fayette County, the school system and Operation Read Inc. tutors do the training.

Unlike children, adult readers want instant gratification. At their first lesson, they are taught to read sentences and practical words they can use immediately — either on the job or outside of it.
— Connie Schwein
Operation Read coordinator

"I could never do any volunteer work where I'm not closely involved with someone," said [illegible] Fox, 23, who taught the class.

"There are so many rewards. You learn so much from this person."

Ms. Fox, who tutors a young man, talked to the class about the "do's and don't's" of teaching an adult to read.

Always remember that the student is an adult, she said. Tutors also should try to find reading materials that are about subjects that interest the students.

Unlike children, adult readers want instant gratification, said Connie Schwein, literacy coordinator for the Fayette County schools and Operation Read. At their first lesson, they are taught to read sentences and practical words they can use immediately — either on the job or outside of it.

"It's very intense," Ms. Taylor said. "It's going to require a lot of patience."

The class watched a videotape in which Mrs. Schwein helped a man write his own story and then taught him to read it.

Afterward, the class members practiced on each other. One person dictated an off-the-cuff story of several sentences, while a partner printed what was said.

Ms. Bantel dictated a story about her cats to Vickie Weber. When they finished they talked excitedly about teaching another person to read.

"They may not want to read *War and Peace*, but they may just want to read a McDonald's menu," Ms. Bantel, 34, said.

"Or how about the phone book?" Mrs. Weber, 36, suggested.

"Right," Ms. Bantel replied. "The things we take for granted every day."

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September 22, 1987

'A one-woman miracle': trying to break the cycle of illiteracy

Last of three parts

By Mary Ann Roser
Herald-Leader education writer

MONTICELLO — There is a poverty in Wayne County's hollows that Sister Barbara Walsh knows all too well.

It is a poverty of learning handed down from one generation to the next.

Sister Barbara is trying to break the cycle.

This is the sixth year she has operated her School on Wheels, a colorful van with painted cartoon characters on the outside and a classroom on the inside. Sister Barbara takes her school to young children, their parents and any adult who wants to learn to read.

No child is too young or adult too old for her to teach.

"The people are very happy in their own environment. You have to bring the school to them," she said.

"I could have it in the basement of my church, but I don't think I could have gotten the people we need."

Praise and patience

Just after 8 o'clock on a Thursday morning earlier this month, Sister Barbara pulled off the side of a rural county road and beeped the horn.

"I can't take the van down there," she said, pointing to the steep, narrow driveway that leads to Sinda Perkins' house.

Miss Perkins appeared in the doorway of the van, books in hand and eager to get started.

"She's got patience with me," Miss Perkins said. "If someone don't have patience with me, I can't learn. Some people in school had patience with me, and some didn't. The ones who had patience with me, I learned what I did from them."

Miss Perkins, 37, dropped out in the ninth grade, barely literate. She said she was "too backwards and shy" to ask questions when she did not understand something.

But with Sister Barbara's patience and expertise, she is learning fast.

Miss Perkins opened her book and read a story to Sister Barbara. When she finished, Sister Barbara alternately quizzed and praised her.

Miss Perkins says Sister Barbara is an answer to prayer. "I was hoping a Christian lady would come into my life who could help me."

Until last year, Sister Barbara's students were all poor children, youngsters who did not have the advantage of preschool programs and whose parents were either unwilling or unable to work with them.

Now, Sister Barbara, 55, is Wayne County's literacy coordinator, and she has extended her school to illiterate adults as well. She visits 23 families once every week, and it is not uncommon for her to teach three children at once.

Regardless of their age, Sister Barbara heaps praise on her students.

"You're giving me the bighead," Miss Perkins protested. "... Other people have more confidence in me than I do in myself. People build me up too high."

Sister Barbara was undaunted. She praised Miss Perkins again and assigned next week's lesson.

Shapes and colors

Moments later, the van pulled away. Sister Barbara turned onto a dirt road. The van rattled and bounced before stopping abruptly.

Little Stanley Crabtree came running, his mother, Joyce, behind him.

"Good morning!" Sister Barbara said, hugging Stanley, who is 4.

Stanley climbed aboard, almost too excited to listen and learn.

With seemingly inexhaustible patience, Sister Barbara worked with him over and over on the colors red and green. She pulled out crayons, blocks and other shapes, all in those two colors.

Stanley is the youngest of four children and the only one not yet in school. Sister Barbara taught his siblings when they were younger. Over the years, she has won the family's affection and trust.

The lesson moved quickly. Sister Barbara pulled out magnetic squares, triangles and circles, telling Stanley to put red ones and green ones on a magnetic board. She then brought out crayons and made a red apple and a green tree for him to color.

Sister Barbara's van is full of books and teaching aids, all of which are stacked on shelves secured by bars. She has chalkboards and posters of the alphabet and numbers hanging on the walls.

It is indeed a classroom in miniature, and the children are fascinated by it.

When the lesson was over, Sister Barbara asked Mrs. Crabtree to post the picture of the green tree and red apple on the refrigerator. She told her to make Stanley identify his colors every time he wanted something to eat.

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Both of Stanley's parents are enrolled in a literacy program, but Mrs. Crabtree, 28, said she had not kept up with her lessons like she should.

The family's house was in such bad repair that it had to be torn down. Sister Barbara and some neighbors and students helped build a new one.

"Now all I'm thinking about is getting the house ready for winter," Mrs. Crabtree said.

A head start on school

It was 10:10 a.m., and Sister Barbara still had four stops left.

Among them were Ashley Crabtree, a pretty, blond girl of 2, who sat on her mother's lap and learned to grasp objects and fit pegs into a board of holes; Rodney Foster, 3, who happily performed every task with a gleam in his blue eyes; and LeShawnda Gilmore, not quite 2, who learned to identify words from pictures.

> 'I was in a very affluent parish, and I just felt a calling to work with poor kids.'
> — Sister Barbara Walsh

The day's lessons ended at 1 p.m.

By educating preschool children, Sister Barbara hopes to give them a head start on kindergarten.

Education experts say early childhood education is an effective way to prevent future dropouts and future generations of illiterate adults. Although illiteracy is not hereditary, it is easily passed from parent to child.

"I know I'm only reaching 37 or 38 children. But it's 38 this year and 38 next year who might not have been touched," Sister Barbara said.

LeShawnda is one of two black children Sister Barbara is teaching, but she wants others to sign up. Sister Barbara asked LeShawnda's mother and aunt if they knew of any other black children or adults she could teach.

The van, she told them, is for everyone.

'Just one of the people'

Sister Barbara came to Kentucky six years ago from Fall River, Mass., where she was a teacher and principal of a Catholic school. She was on a sabbatical leave and was working with the Christian Appalachian Project when a Wayne County priest invited her to visit his community.

She discovered that the education needs were great and that many young children were at risk of failing in school because of their background.

"I was in a very affluent parish, and I just felt a calling to work with poor kids," said Sister Barbara, who is a member of the Holy Union of the Sacred Hearts order.

Working out of her car, she began visiting homes to teach children. She later bought the van and converted it into a classroom. She paid for the project with money from grants and donations.

To get more residents involved in literacy, she sings in a radio commercial that has been broadcast for about a week on a local station.

"She is working so hard to get more students," said Marjorie Bow, the head librarian at the Wayne County Library. Nearly everyone in the county knows Sister Barbara and respects her work, she added.

"She's just one of the people," the librarian said. "In order to be able to teach these people, she first had to sell herself. She's done a wonderful job. . . .

"To me, she just knows God in a personal way. You can feel that in her love to everyone."

In many ways, Sister Barbara is a one-woman miracle.

But she would like more people to join the fight against illiteracy in Wayne County. Fifty-nine percent of the adults 25 and older had less than eight years of schooling, according to the 1980 census.

"I just wish we could get people excited about sharing . . . their education," Sister Barbara said. "How about sharing it with someone who is groping?"

THE LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER
September 22, 1987

Many high school dropouts didn't feel wanted

This is the first installment in a series on high school dropouts. The series will continue in Monday's Montgomery Advertiser.

Teachers didn't try to dissuade them, most school dropouts say

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

When 16-year-old Dow Warrick announced that he was dropping out of Floyd Junior High School, the principal called his mother to make sure she knew about her son's decision.

Floyd Principal Robert Clements said he made no effort to discourage Warrick at that time.

Warrick said he felt no one wanted him to stay in school.

"I got in a lot of trouble at Floyd," he said. "They were going to kick me out anyway," he added.

According to researchers at the Auburn University Center for School Effectiveness and Evaluation, Warrick's feeling of not being wanted at the school is typical of many dropouts.

Project director William A. Spencer said the message the 440 recent dropouts interviewed by the team were getting from the schools often was "we're glad to see you leave."

THE AUBURN CENTER did the study after U.S. Department of Education statistics showed that Alabama has the second highest dropout rate in the nation.

According to those figures, the dropout rate nationally was 29 percent in 1984, while the Alabama dropout rate was 37.9 percent — exceeded only by Louisiana.

Among those who dropped out of Alabama schools this year was 17-year-old Stephen Moore, formerly a student at Carver High School.

"They really didn't want me there," Moore said. "They throwed me out because I got into some trouble."

Carver Principal Dwight Madison said Moore, like all students, was assigned a counselor at the start of the school year. But Moore said he was not encouraged to see the counselor and did not talk to the counselor before he withdrew from school.

"They never let me talk to a counselor. They didn't trust me," Moore said.

Madison said it is possible Moore never talked to his assigned counselor.

Clements said Floyd's counselor talked to Warrick before he decided to withdraw, but Warrick said he felt the school did not want him to stay.

He said he also was afraid of attending Lanier, where he would go after completing his studies at Floyd.

Willie Henderson, now 20, said he left school at 16 after he was expelled from Jefferson Davis High School for missing too many days of school.

"They put me out," he said.

THE AUBURN STUDY discusses what the researchers call "pushouts," students like Moore and Henderson who had been expelled from school.

The study indicates that almost 62 percent of the dropouts had been suspended at least once, and about a fifth had been expelled.

Because many of the students come from poor and working-class homes, with parents who have no more than a high school education, the parents are reluctant to challenge school officials, Spencer said.

According to the book "Dropouts in America," published by the non-profit Institute for Educational Leadership, evidence shows that suspensions are ineffective in encouraging good discipline and, by keeping students out of class, alienate them from school.

U.S. Office of Civil Rights data show that black students are more apt to be suspended than white students in Montgomery and in Alabama as a whole.

While suspensions are a major reason for a student's decision to withdraw from high school, the Auburn study found that excessive absences and poor grades led the list of reasons given by the dropouts interviewed in the study.

James Graham, 17, who dropped out of Capitol Heights Junior High School earlier this year, said he "just stopped going to school."

"So the principal decided just to put me out," Graham said.

Tammy Steiner, 17, who dropped out of Lanier at the beginning of the school year, said she had problems with schoolwork.

"I COULDN'T ADJUST to all the subjects. There were too many for me," Steiner said.

LeRoy Scott, a 17-year-old who recently dropped out of Capitol Heights, said he left school because he had failed several grades.

Scott and Steiner, unlike most of the other dropouts interviewed, said teachers tried to talk them out of withdrawing.

Twenty-year-old Vincent Boykin, who dropped out of Lanier in 1983, said he withdrew from school because he was having health problems and missed too many days of school. He said he feels he was "put out."

Lionel Garnier, assistant superintendent for pupil personnel services for Montgomery schools, said students who miss more than 15 or 20 days a semester can be denied credit.

"Some come back the next semester; some do not come back," Garnier said.

Those who are told to come back the next semester are asked to turn in their books, Garnier said.

He said students sometimes are suspended for disrupting the learning environment of other students.

The students interviewed for this article all have a chance to get a high school equivalency diploma because they are enrolled at the Adult Learning Center.

But Margaret Tucker, director of the center, said the dropout rate for adult learners is greater than 50 percent because jobs, family obligations and the problems that caused the students to drop out the first time keep interfering with their education.

ALTHOUGH COUNSELORS are supposed to work with students who have behavior problems, many are bogged down with paperwork, Garnier said.

Garnier said he would like to see some alternative programs with smaller classes and more individual attention for problem students.

Like most educators, Garnier said potential dropouts can be detected in elementary school.

Montgomery has counselors in high school and junior high school, and some elementary counselors assigned to the federally funded Chapter 1 remedial programs, Garnier said. He said the school system does not have funds to hire a counselor for every elementary school.

Jessie Bibbins, a counselor at Lanier, said she would like to see dropout prevention start in elementary school.

Bibbins, who was a counselor at Bellingrath Junior High School before moving to Lanier, said that when a student who has been held back finally reaches the seventh grade, he is sometimes too discouraged to complete school.

Rebecca Bell, one of the Auburn researchers, said she was struck by the number of students who told her they felt that not enough people in the school cared whether they stayed in school.

THE DROPOUT RATE is computed differently in different states, but generally it refers to the percentage of students who start the ninth grade but do not complete high school, and it is cumulative, so that the percentage of dropouts for any particular year will be significantly lower than the rate spread over four years.

Figures released by the state Department of Education show that 11,664 of Alabama's 730,000 students dropped out of high school during the 1985-86 academic year.

During the same year, 740 of the aproximately 30,000 Montgomery students dropped out of school, according to the official report submitted to the state Department of Education — making the local dropout rate slightly higher than the state average.

Generally, the dropout rate is higher in urban areas than in rural areas and is higher for boys than for girls.

THE MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER and
ALABAMA JOURNAL
May 24, 1987

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Prison students learn better

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

Many 16-year-old high school students would like to attend college.

But for a boy behind bars who was several grades behind in school a few months ago, an ambition to succeed in academics represents a shift in thinking.

As he talked about his future, the youngster was sitting before a computer terminal in the Mount Meigs campus of the Department of Youth Services school, which serves youngsters who have been sentenced to the detention facility because they have violated the law.

Like most youthful felons, this student had repeated grades in school. When he arrived about six months ago, he was in the ninth grade.

NOW, WITH THE AID of the individualized instruction offered at the school and the strict rules that govern student behavior 24 hours a day, he believes he can finish high school before he finishes his sentence later this spring.

John Stewart, superintendent of the school system operated by the department, said it is unfair to compare academic progress at the DYS school with any other school because the department has the students under control both day and night.

A 17-year-old inmate who was in the ninth grade a few months ago said he hopes to pass the high school equivalency examination within days and be released shortly afterwards.

His grades in public school were mostly failing. At the DYS school, they are A's and B's with a few C's, he said.

"There's nothing else to do," he explained.

Stewart said about 88 percent of the students at the school qualify for special education services.

Stewart said the most common problem is students who are classified as emotionally conflicted, but some have learning disabilities, and some are mildly retarded.

Because so much of the program is geared to special education, the entire education program is operated like special education classes, with each student being tested and provided with an individualized education plan.

Whether or not they are classified as special education students, most are behind their peers' grade level, Stewart said.

THERE IS EVIDENCE that failure in school is tied to anti-social behavior.

A recent study of school dropouts by the Auburn University Center for School Effectiveness and Evaluation says failure in school can lead to alienation and "a variety of norm-violating behaviors."

The students at the DYS schools say they dislike the incarceration, the rules and the absence of girls.

But most also say they like the individualized instruction better than the traditional education offered in public schools.

"You can get more attention here," said one 17-year-old inmate.

Stewart said the school tries to offer education for each student.

Tests sometimes will show a student with mathematics skills at a seventh-grade level but reading skills at a fourth-grade level, he said.

In that case, the education plan for that student will include a program to improve reading starting at a fourth-grade level, while offering mathematics at a more advanced level, Stewart said.

"We have a lot of individualized instruction," he said.

In classes, students work at their own pace from workbooks and assignments given by teachers. There are no lectures.

Because students are confined to Mt. Meigs for a limited time — usually a year at the most — the school cannot be conducted with regular grades and classes like most schools.

"Our principals and teachers have to be aware that time doesn't coordinate with the school year, but they try to get the students to earn credits," Stewart said.

It can be very meaningful for a child to achieve his normal grade level, he said.

THE MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER and
ALLABAMA JOURNAL
May 24, 1987

Dropout Prevention May Begin As Early As Elementary School

This is the final installment in a series on high school dropouts.

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

Two years ago, Russell Chavers decided to quit school.

"I'd just made up my mind I wasn't going to stay in the 8th grade," Chavers said during a break from his carpentry class at the Elmore County Vocational Center where he is now in the 11th grade.

What kept Chavers in school was a program begun in January 1985 by Elmore County Vocational Director Howard Spivey and Special Education Coordinator Marshall Anderson. The Alternative Education Program offers overage junior high school students an opportunity to enter high school and begin earning credit toward graduation.

As one of the first students to enter the program, Chavers, then 16, was promoted in mid-term to the 9th grade. Now, he plans to graduate in 1988.

Tommy Henley, who is Chavers' classmate, said the classes are different from the junior high school classes he attended before moving to the vocational program.

"Here, they've got more patience with you," Henley said.

Students in the program are given individualized instruction in small classes, using teaching methods similar to those offered in special education classes or in adult classes.

"Before, I just didn't want to be there," Henley said. "I just wouldn't do my work."

Henley is now hoping to attend college on a football scholarship and later to play professional football, an ambition that might have ended in junior high school.

Bobby Smith, a 16-year-old 10th grader, said he likes the program so much that he has not missed a day of school.

"I was fixing to quit until this program picked me up," Smith said.

Because no one has completed the two-year-old program, Spivey said it is impossible to say with certainty that it has worked, but the dropout rate for the approximately 26 students enrolled in the program is less than the rate for high-risk students in Elmore County.

A high-risk student is one who is older than his classmates, is having academic problems and has poor attendance. People who work with these youngsters say many of them also have emotional or family problems.

The Elmore County Alternative Education Program is one of many efforts around the state to reduce Alabama's high dropout rate.

Like most Alabama dropout prevention programs, it suffers from lack of money, Spivey said.

"We need more space and more rooms and more people to work with the students," Spivey said. "We can't serve the needs of the county without more money."

Anita Sherman, the vocational counselor who works with the program, said much of its success comes from the fact that the school works with outside agencies, including the courts, the Family Counseling Cen-

Please See COUNSELING, 2A

Administrators Alarmed Over High Dropout Rate

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

School administrators are concerned about high school dropouts and do not encourage them to leave school, the executive director of the Alabama Council for School Administration and Supervision said Tuesday.

ACSAS Executive Director Max Joiner held a news conference to respond to a news story that cited school dropouts and researchers as saying that many school officials make no effort to keep problem students in school.

The story, which appeared in Sunday's edition of The Montgomery Advertiser and Alabama Journal, included an interview with William A. Spencer, who directed a study of dropouts done by the Auburn University Center for School Effectiveness and Evaluation.

Spencer said the message many of the 440 recent dropouts interviewed by the team were getting from school officials was "we're glad to see you leave."

Joiner said the quote was offensive to school administrators.

"Administrators' reputations and, yes, their credibility with the public have been dealt a severe blow," Joiner said.

"School adminstrators have been and will continue to be concerned with school dropouts. Many school systems in Alabama are working diligently to cope with the problem."

Joiner cited the Tuscaloosa city schools, which offer remediation for students who are in danger of failing a grade.

Spencer's quote did not appear in the study but was included as part of the interview.

Joiner took issue with the speed at which the study was done and at some of the methods used including telephone interviews with many of the participants and the fact that the school systems from which the students dropped out were not contacted.

Jack Blackburn, dean of education at Auburn, said the team that developed the study was aware that the funding did not permit as much depth as the researchers would have liked.

"But we felt the generalizations would stand up," Blackburn said.

Blackburn said he believes a lot of students feel unwanted both at school and at home.

One of the reasons cited in the study for students leaving school is that teachers do not care.

"The study is not criticizing administrators; it is just reporting what the students said," Blackburn said.

THE MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER
May 27, 1987

Counseling 'Vital' To Keeping Troubled Students In School

Continued From 1A

ter, drug and alcohol prevention programs and medical facilities.

The book "Dropouts in America," published by the non-profit Institute for Educational Leadership, says any successful program for preventing dropouts should include services that address the entire range of problems these students face.

The book says counseling is vital to keep these troubled students in school. A study of Alabama dropouts by the Auburn University Center for School Effectiveness and Evaluation also recommends more counseling as a means of preventing dropouts.

Sherman said her duties include maintaining close, one-on-one contact with students in the program as the Auburn study recommends.

The relationships developed in smaller classes turn teachers into counselors as well, Sherman said.

Some school systems, like Talladega County, start their efforts in elementary school — a strategy recommended in "Dropouts in America."

Beverly Smith, attendance coordinator for Talladega County, said the school system tries to recognize children who have frequent absences beginning in kindergarten.

School officials try to work with all problem students, but in a rural school system with 15 schools, funds limit the activities, Smith said.

But Smith said she is pleased with the support teams now established in two elementary schools.

Horace Pope, special education coordinator for the system, said the support teams are available to help teachers with problem students — whether the problems stem from behavior or academics.

The team tries to find ways to help these problem students before sending them for assessment for special education services, Pope said.

One of the purposes of the program is to build a bridge between special education and the regular classroom, with teams looking for methods to help students with academic problems who do not qualify for special education services.

Howard Fortney, another Talladega supervisor, said the school system has applied for grants to do increased dropout prevention services, including an alternative school for students with behavior problems and a change in instruction methods in the early grades.

Smith said she favors less formal grade promotion policies for the early grades — possibly a system that would allow students in kindergarten through third grade to master a series of skills rather than place them in formal grades as is now done.

"Dropouts in America" recommends putting children of different ages in the same classroom to reduce the stigma of being overaged for the child who repeats a grade.

The book also recommends giving elementary students opportunities to make up unsatisfactory work throughout the year, rather than fail an entire grade.

Fannye Gray, director of the Home Extension Learning Project for Tuscaloosa city schools, said the school system offers afternoon tutoring programs to some 280 students who are in danger of failing.

The program operates on a budget of $9,000 a year, with $7,000 contributed by the school system and $2,000 by the Tuscaloosa Ministerial Alliance, an organization of black ministers who began the program several years ago because so many black youngsters were failing grades, Gray said.

Gray said the program is able to provide individualized instruction for so little money because dedicated teachers are willing to work a few extra hours a week for $10 an hour. Aides earn $5 an hour, and the program attracts many volunteers, Gray said.

Last year, 93 percent of the students met school promotion standards, Gray said.

While many Alabama school systems are working at keeping more students in school, the state Board of Education is waiting for a study by a task force of superintendents who are studying the issue.

Lauderdale County School Superintendent Osbie Linville, who is chairing that committee, said the most frequent complaint from dropouts is that nobody cares.

Linville said he would like to penalize school officials who allow students to drop out of school without telling them they are interested and want them to stay.

"I'm going to tell my principals that if I ever hear of a student dropping out of school without somebody saying 'I care,' I'm going to raise all manner of Cain," Linville said.

Linville said Lauderdale schools have a strict attendance policy that has helped keep students in school, but, more importantly, the school system offers remediation programs at all grade levels.

The remediation is held in the regular classroom with assignments adjusted for students who are behind in their work, Linville said.

Guntersville Superintendent Brandon Sparkman, another member of the committee, said his school system starts working with parents as early as kindergarten, in an effort to keep students in school.

The Guntersville program works through the federally funded Head Start program for four- and five-year-olds to bring poor parents and school officials together.

Because children of poor families are more likely to drop out than children of wealthier backgrounds, many educators believe that poor parents are not concerned about their children, Sparkman said.

Sparkman said the program has demonstrated that these parents are as concerned about their children as middle income parents, but are often intimidated by school officials.

To get the parents to attend the meetings, parents already involved in the program make home visits, as do teachers, Sparkman said.

At the meetings, teachers and principals provide the parents with games and other tools they can use to help children learn.

"We found it changes the lives of people pretty drastically," Sparkman said. "People who never thought they could help a child learn take the games home and wear them out."

Sparkman said he hopes next year to expand the program to include parents of all income levels — not just poor parents.

"Dropouts in America" recommends working with parents as a method of dropout prevention.

At the beginning of the book, authors Andrew Hahn, Jacqueline Danzberger and Bernard Lefkowitz say research has provided enough information to attack the school dropout problem and the poverty and alienation that is often the fate of those who drop out of school.

The recommendations include working with parents, having schools operate all year, individualized remedial instruction and more accountability for dropouts at all levels of the education system.

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Vocational Programs Key To Dropout Prevention

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

When school began in August 1985, Gene Yu stayed home. It was almost a month later that he decided to give high school one more try. He was in the 11th grade.

"I almost ruined my future over having fun with friends and skipping," said Yu, now 19 and slated to graduate in May.

Yu said much of his success during his final two years of high school is due to the help he received from Terry Carlisle, an electricity instructor at Montgomery Area Vocational Center.

"Mr. Carlisle helped me through last year — my hardest year," Yu said. "This year's been real good."

Now, Yu said he hopes to attend college next year while he works part time at a karate school that he operates with his brother.

Rufus Boswell, 19, agreed with Yu that the electricity class has helped him stay in school.

"I thought about dropping out three years ago," Boswell said.

After he finishes in May, Boswell plans to attend a technical college.

Montgomery Vocational Coordinator Stan Neuenschwander said each Montgomery junior high school has a vocational counselor who is assigned to identify potential dropouts and guide them into vocational programs.

The vocational program is the keystone of dropout prevention in Montgomery. But the system also operates a small program funded through the federal Jobs Training Partnership Act that enables low-income high school seniors to hold afternoon jobs.

Anita Leige, who directs the School-to-Work Transition Program, said 30 students are now working in after school jobs as a direct result of that program.

One of her duties is to find jobs for these students — many of whom do not qualify for cooperative education programs because they do not have a car.

Paketa Mays takes a bus every afternoon from Lanier High School to The Animal Clinic.

"It's shown me how to take responsibility and take control of my life," said Mays, who had never held a job before.

Montgomery also operates three separate cooperative education programs that allow hundreds of high school students to work in the afternoon.

Neuenschwander said many of the students had moved from part-time student workers to full-time workers after graduation.

The book, "Dropouts in America," published by the Institute for Educational Leadership links suspensions to dropping out of school — saying students who drop out of school usually have been suspended at least once.

Montgomery Superintendent Thomas Bobo said he would like to have an alternative school as a means of punishing students who misbehave without suspending them.

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Skills Programs Give Dropouts Chance To Defy Economic Odds

This is the third installment in a series on high school dropouts.

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

When Julius Rush dropped out of Carver High School he was putting his future in jeopardy.

"Dropping out of school all but extinguishes the hope of making it in our competitive economy," said U.S. Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Rush, now 21, has defied the odds. For the past two years, he has been employed as a welder at Alabama Steel Supply, a steel surplus and salvage firm located in West Montgomery.

Rush got his second chance when, at age 19, he enrolled in the welding program at the Montgomery Skills Center, a training program funded through the federal Job Training Partnership Act.

"I'm happy here," Rush said of his job at Alabama Steel Supply.

His boss, Alabama Steel Supply Vice President Jerald Labovitz, is pleased with Rush and other employees hired from the JTPA program.

When John Kelly, the welding instructor at the skills center, visited Alabama Steel Supply recently, Labovitz asked for more applicants.

The JTPA employees compare "very favorably" with other workers, Labovitz said.

JTPA is a holdover from the social reform programs of the 1960s, a national network of job training aimed at providing the unemployed poor with an opportunity to acquire marketable skills, said Jim Northcutt, state JTPA director.

The justification for the program is rooted in the statistics behind Pell's comment. According to a study by the Auburn University Center for School Effectiveness and Evaluation, male high school graduates over the age of 25 earn over $7,000 a year more than workers with only an 8th grade education.

Although many of the students enrolled in JTPA programs are high school dropouts, not all are.

Robert Smith was graduated from Central High School in Lowndes County, but neither his high school diploma nor vocational courses in agriculture and small engine repair led to a job.

Smith, now 23, found a job after he enrolled in the JTPA welding program. He now works at Homeguard Manufacturing Co., a firm that manufactures security and storm doors.

Kelly said the placement rate for students who stay in the welding class for more than a few days is nearly 100 percent.

JTPA, which this year will have to cut back services unless the Legislature replaces funds lost due to federal cutbacks, is only one of a number of second-chance programs for young people who do not find success through the public school system.

While JTPA serves adults of any age, the Central Alabama Opportunities Industrialization Center operates exclusively for disadvantaged youth — those in their late teens or early 20s who lack the skills to get or keep a job.

To be eligible for either OIC or JTPA, an applicant must meet economic qualifications set by the state Employment Service. David White, assistant manager for the downtown Montgomery office for the Employment Service, said that, in Montgomery, a family of four with a gross earned income of less than $12,000 a year meets those guidelines.

OIC Director Connie Harper, a former teacher, said she began the program in 1969 after she became disillusioned with public schools.

"OIC wouldn't be here if public education had done its job," Harper said.

Eric Stewart, 18, had been in the program only three weeks when he got a job in Greenville — the first job he ever had except for summer work.

"It's a terrific place," Stewart said of OIC the day he left the program.

Stewart is a graduate of Central High School in Lowndes County.

Linda Jarrett, 20, who dropped out of Jefferson Davis High School when she became pregnant, said the program has increased her self-confidence and made her willing to look for work.

JTPA and OIC are among the programs designed to help students who were failed by the public school system.

A second-chance program that has no economic limits is Adult Basic Education, a program aimed at giving anyone over 16 a chance to receive a high school diploma by passing a high school equivalency examination.

ABE programs are offered in every school system in the state.

In Montgomery as well as other school sytems, ABE acts as an alternative school for recent dropouts who could not adjust to the ordinary school program.

After one day at Lee High School in September, Lacita Brown, 18, withdrew from public school and enrolled at the Adult Learning Center.

"It was just the people at school," Brown said. "It seems like I'm a quiet person, and I don't do everything the other kids do in school.

"It's more comfortable for me to be here. [illegible] learned more here anyway. They take time to explain it and go over it with you," she said.

Student after student at the Adult Learning Center echoed Brown's comments about individual attention and being allowed to work at his or her own pace.

Tammy Steiner, 17, who dropped out of Sidney Lanier High School earlier this year, said she could not adjust to studying so many subjects at once.

"At Lanier, the teachers wouldn't come to you individually. Here, they let you go at your own pace and don't try to rush you at things," Steiner said.

She said she expects to take the GED as soon as she turns 18 in September.

Except for students in the Department of Youth Services schools, the state prohibits students from taking the GED before their 18th birthday unless they are 17 and have been out of school for at least one year, said Margaret Tucker, director of Montgomery's Adult Learning Center.

Tucker said students are able to advance quickly in the ABE program because the individual learning plans are designed to give students the knowledge they need to pass the test.

Tucker said she uses a variety of teaching materials. If one type of material does not work with a particular student, she will try another.

Although the GED test is not easy, the curriculum offered at the Adult Learning Center falls short of the broad academic and social experience provided by a regular high school, Tucker said.

"If you can handle the school situation, you need to stay in high school," Tucker said.

She said many of the younger students who come to the center are having emotional as well as academic problems, and the staff at the center is trained to be patient with them for that reason.

For adults, family responsibilities and work schedules make it difficult to attend regularly, she said.

"I encourage them to come whenever they can," she said.

More than half of all ABE students drop out of the program without passing the GED, according to state Department of Education statistics.

But Tucker said dropouts are not always failures. Some illiterate adults have learned to read or do simple arithmetic or acquired the skills they need to get a better job.

Adult learners of all ages frequently suffer from a lack of self confidence, and Tucker sees one role of the center as helping the students gain confidence in themselves.

Although the program is based at the Adult Learning Center on Union Street, Tucker has teachers who work with Montgomery's technical colleges, with the JTPA program and with other agencies.

She would like to offer the programs in other locations as well.

"With more money, we could put more classes where the people are, like in industries or churches," she said.

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Job Training Helps Turn Dropouts Into Success Stories

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Five years ago, at age 15, Juan Carlos Romero walked from El Salvador to the United States to avoid having to fight in the civil war in his native country.

At 20, Romero is waging a personal war against poverty, and despite the handicaps of a language barrier and a poor education, he is winning.

On a sunny day in early April, Romero squatted on a hill overlooking San Francisco Bay, welding fence posts under the guidance of Don Macchiarini, a former shipyard worker who is helping disadvantaged youngsters learn skills that can lead them to jobs.

Romero is one of 80 young people who have joined the San Francisco Conservation Corps, an organization patterned after the Civilian Conservation Corps established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Depression to put unemployed young men to work on public service projects.

The 1980s version of a conservation corps, which includes young women as well as men, gives the corps members lessons in the work habits they will need to get and keep jobs.

Robert Burkhardt, executive director of the program, requires that all corps members arrive at the Golden Gate Recreation Area at 7:30 a.m. for a routine of calisthenics and a two-mile run through the park that overlooks the Golden Gate Bridge.

As the exercise routine ended one, Burkhardt announced that 18-year-old Edward Ferdinand had gotten a job with a printing firm called Zooinc for a training period that will last two or three months. Ferdinand hopes he can keep the job.

"If I train good enough and give it my all, I can stay on," he said.

Allen Grenberg, president of Zooinc, said he has hired several Conservation Corps members and is pleased with them.

Because the corps screens applicants before they send them out to apply for jobs, Grenberg said they are much better, as a rule, than the applicants he would get if he took out an advertisement in the newspaper.

Ferdinand, like many corps members, is a high school dropout. He said he plans to continue adult basic education classes with the corps so he can pass a high school equivalency test.

Before he joined the program, Ferdinand said he was "just sitting at home and not doing anything."

The corps members work on public service jobs four days a week and attend four hours of classes on Friday.

The classwork varies depending on the student and includes English lessons, training in job-related skills and studies that will lead to a high school diploma.

Macchiarini said he took a cut in pay from his job as a welder and pipefitter at the shipyard to work with the conservation corps after the group did improvements at the school his daughter attends.

Macchiarini got to know the group after he volunteered to help with the improvements.

"I was so impressed, I applied for a job," he said.

Romero, whose English is now good enough to enable him to translate for more recent immigrants who are part of his crew, also is studying for his high school diploma.

Romero said he would like to work for the Conservation Corps when he completes his training.

After a year with the corps, Romero has moved up to the rank of crew chief.

Most of the crew is Hispanic and only one, Ernesto Contawe, has been in the United States longer than Romero.

Contawe, 18, who moved from the Philippines with his family six years ago, joined the corps early this year and is now acting crew chief when Romero is absent.

He said he plans to stay with the corps only for a year and then get a better paying job.

"I'll probably be a construction worker or a carpenter," Contawe said.

The corps members earn minimum wage, with slight increases every three months. Top pay for a crew chief is $5.50 an hour.

Two members of the crew, Arturo Forte, 18, and Rameros Barajas, 23, speak only limited English and rely on Contawe and Romero to translate for them.

According to the book "Dropouts in America" published by the Institute for Educational Leadership, a non-profit organization based in Washington, programs like the conservation corps that combine education and job training are an effective way of serving the young people who enroll.

The problem with such programs is that too few students join them, the book says.

The authors, Andrew Hahn, Jacqueline Danzberger and Bernard Lefkowitz, recommend a massive national outreach campaign with specially trained caseworkers to contact dropouts.

One of the problems with reaching dropouts is the lack of information about what happens to them after they leave school, said William Spencer, who directed an Auburn University study of dropouts in Alabama.

The Auburn study recommends a computerized tracking system for students that would make it easier to monitor dropouts, and it recommends that counselors contact students to determine why they left school.

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Lack Of Specialized Programs Harmful To Borderline Students

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

0At age 10, Eric Campbell could be headed for failure.

According to the book, "Dropouts in America," published by the non-profit Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, Eric, who has repeated two elementary school grades, is four times more likely to drop out of school than a student who was not held back.

Although Eric is enrolled in a federally funded remedial reading program, his mother said he still has not learned to read.

Otherwise, he is repeating the curriculum that led him to fail last year.

Eric's mother, Melissa Baker, is angry at the school system for failing her son — just as it failed her when she dropped out of Floyd Junior High School 17 years ago.

"They don't care," she said.

Margaret Compton, principal at Forest Avenue Elementary School where Eric is a student, said standardized tests show Eric has no learning problem that would make him eligible for the special classes designed to help handicapped students with academic work.

Special education classes, with limited enrollments, offer students more individual attention than regular classes.

Baker said the tests are correct in showing that Eric has normal intelligence.

"He can use measuring cups; he can cook; and he learns," she said. "But it's all visual learning — not really from books."

Baker, who dropped out of school at the age of 15, began taking classes at Montgomery's Adult Learning Center in September. In March, she passed a high school equivalency test.

She hopes to enroll at Auburn University at Montgomery this September so she can better support her family. Her husband, disabled by an automobile accident last year, is unable to work.

After the accident, while she was in Atlanta with her injured husband, her two sons, upset at the disruption caused by the family crisis, both had problems in school.

In April, Eric's teacher told him it would be useless to return to school because he would not pass the third grade, Baker said.

The reason overage students drop out is that they hate being "too old" for the class, according to "Dropouts in America."

Whether Eric's problems are emotional or academic, both state and local officials agree that he is one of many problem students who are ineligible for special help.

Eldon Johnson, who retired April 1 as director of student instructional services for the state Department of Education, said the education budget presented to the Legislature this year included funds for some problem students not now eligible for special classes.

Johnson said the school system does not serve many students with minor learning disabilities.

Lionel Garnier, assistant superintendent for pupil personnel services for Montgomery County schools, said the solution for students like Eric is to have more elementary counselors and an alternative school with smaller classes, which would offer more attention to the students.

Both cost money that the school system does not have, Garnier said.

"Dropouts in America," however, says a review of research shows that keeping students back a grade in elementary school "makes less sense than providing the special services students need to perform at grade level."

"Holding students back is also expensive, over $4,000 per extra year of school," the book says.

Students held back in school score lower on achievement tests than similar students passed on to the next grade, the book says.

According to a study of dropouts conducted by the Auburn University Center for School Effectiveness and Evaluation, 30 percent of all dropouts are documented as educationally handicapped while 66 percent have the intellectual ability to graduate from high school.

The remaining 4 percent drop out because of unforeseen circumstances such as medical problems, family tragedy and pregnancy — the most common reason girls drop out of school.

Researchers who worked on the Auburn study say many of the students who are not recognized as learning disabled have learning problems that make school difficult.

One larger group of problem students is known as a slow learner, one whose tested intelligence quotient is higher than 70, (below which would classify one as retarded) and yet lower than 90, which is usually required to keep pace with schoolwork.

Maria Holbrook, another Auburn researcher who has also worked in special education, said slow learners and students with slight learning and physical disabilities "fall through the cracks" of the system.

"There are pupils that have hearing problems but do not neatly fit into the programs funded," she said.

Ann James, past president of the Alabama PTA and the mother of a learning-disabled child who now attends Auburn University at Montgomery, is sympathetic with Baker.

"In our education system you have to become a failure to get any help," James said.

She also said it is parents, not school officials, who have provided assistance for problem students.

"Any services that are offered to kids with problems have been because parents were out agitating."

James said schools are so involved in course outlines and standardized tests that they sometimes forget they are there to serve children.

"We are teaching curriculum; we are not teaching students," she said.

Interestingly, the Auburn dropout study echoes James in omitting any reference to students from its statement of the purpose of school.

"The purpose of school is to deliver a curriculum," the study says.

Brad Moody, a political science professor at Auburn University at Montgomery, said a uniform school curriculum can diminish children' curiosity.

"It doesn't allow kids to go off and pursue their own curiosity," he said.

Moody said the trend toward a uniform curriculum is reinforced by standardized testing because education officials have to make sure children master the materials that will be included in the standardized tests.

Like Baker, Sherry Garner was upset because her daughter Robin, a slow learner, did not qualify for special education classes.

Garner, through a lengthy battle with the school system, succeeded last year in getting Robin enrolled in a class for children with learning disabilities.

Robin is now making As and Bs at Cloverdale Junior High School, Garner said.

"It's all the difference in the world if you get a little help," Garner said.

But Baker said she felt intimidated by educators with college diplomas when she tried to argue with them about her son's learning problems.

"I don't think it's fair. My child should have just as much as any other child," she said.

"Dropouts in America" says students misdiagnosed as learning disabled or retarded and students whose disabilities are not identified experience dislocation and frustration in school.

James said the education reform movement, which began in 1983, is partly responsible for the dropout problem because children with learning problems have trouble passing standardized tests.

Although her child passed the Alabama High School Graduation Examination, other students did not, she said.

According to the Auburn dropout study, 34 percent of the former students interviewed said they would have left school sooner had standards been raised.

However, 51 percent said it would have no effect, and 14 percent said increased standards would have led them to stay in school longer.

There are tutoring services available for children like Eric but all cost money, and Baker, with two children and an incapacitated husband, cannot afford them.

She has not given up, however. She saved her money and sent off for books designed to teach reading to learning-disabled children.

This summer, she will try to teach Eric at home so that he will have an opportunity to catch up with his age group and will have a better chance in life than his mother, she said.

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Parents Give Vocational Program Failing Grade

By BETTY CORK
Advertiser Staff Writer

Barbara Brown, whose daughter, Tracy, graduated from a Montgomery high school two years ago, gives failing grades to the county vocational program.

Tracy completed the program without job skills or any assistance in finding work, Brown said.

Tracy's vocational curriculum included brick laying, plumbing, commercial cooking and commercial sewing, Brown said.

For Tracy, a special education student who suffers from poor hand-eye coordination, most of the training was useless, her mother said.

Brown said Tracy could do well as a file clerk, but her poor coordination would make it impossible for her to sew well enough to get a job as a commercial seamstress, and her daughter's interests do not extend to plumbing or brick laying.

The Montgomery school system has a policy of diverting special education students as well as students with academic problems into vocational education programs, said vocational director Stan Neuenschwander.

But some parents and former students feel the vocational programs fall short in preparing students for careers or in helping them get jobs after they graduate.

Ethel Gray, whose daughter, Vanessa, is slated to be graduated this spring, is also disappointed with the program.

"They haven't helped her get a job yet," Gray said. "She's been trying to get one."

Gray said Vanessa took brick laying, upholstery, commercial sewing and furniture refinishing. Vanessa, a slow learner, completed her courses in January, but must return this spring to take the Alabama High School Graduation Examination, Gray said.

"I think the government is really wasting money," Gray said. "Those teachers are not really concerned about whether those kids learn or not."

Gray said the teachers always help a few favored students find jobs.

Michael Johnson, who graduated from high school last year after studying electricity under Terry Carlisle at Montgomery Area Vocational Center, said he obtained a job at Rawlinson Electric Co. in Millbrook because Carlisle contacted the firm.

Both Carlisle and Neuenschwander said they could not, in good conscience, recommend a student for employment unless they believed the student would do a good job.

Timothy Bass, a 1985 graduate of Robert E. Lee High School, said he feels the vocational program simply did not provide adequate training.

When he was in the 11th grade, Bass, then 18, dropped his vocational classes in masonry.

"I wasn't even getting enough training to be a brick layer," Bass said.

He is now enrolled at Trenholm State Technical College and hopes to become a contractor after he graduates.

Joe Ward, a private investigator and vocal critic of Montgomery's vocational education program, said he often helps vocational graduates — especially special education students — find jobs when the school system does not.

"It's a dumping ground for problem children," Ward said of the vocational program.

Connie Harper, director of the Central Alabama Opportunities Industrialization Center, agrees that high school vocational programs fail to find jobs for students.

Harper aims her program at finding jobs for the unemployed young people who enroll in the 12-week OIC curriculum that teaches them how to find jobs, how to behave during job interviews and how to keep a job once they are hired.

Many of the students have taken vocational classes.

Wayne Kirk, who took commercial art at Lee High School, said he enrolled in OIC because he was unable to find a job except as a laborer at minimum wage.

Neuenschwander said he would like to see Montgomery's vocational program work more closely with industry to find out what skills should be taught in the school system.

"We'd like a massive survey to find out what programs fit metropolitan Montgomery today," Neuenschwander said.

Harper's program is tied to industry, and more than 90 percent of the students who enroll get jobs, she said.

"That's our success, that we're working closely with industry.

"If vocational education were tied to jobs, there wouldn't be any need for OIC."

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AMARILLO SUNDAY NEWS-GLOBE
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The problem of illiteracy

First of a series to continue in the afternoon Globe-Times.

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

For most adults, reading is almost an involuntary reaction.

The average literate person glances at a particular seven-letter word, for instance, and, without consciously sounding out the syllables, knows the letters spell "library."

For 23 million others in this country, reading is a struggle, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Education.

Those 23 million adults are unable to read a newspaper, directions on a medicine bottle, instructions on a job application or comments on their children's report cards.

They are functionally illiterate.

Another 47 million adults are considered marginally illiterate because, although they have basic reading, writing and computation skills, they cannot use them proficiently, according to information from the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

Each year two million more join the ranks of the illiterate, council figures estimate. By the year 2000, two of three American adults could be illiterate if the problem goes unchecked, according to council figures.

"There definitely is a problem," said Jan Hinds, reading coordinator with Amarillo College's ACcess Division, which offers special developmental courses and support services to help students develop basic skills for college-level work.

In the Texas Panhandle, 68,000 adults – one of five people in the Amarillo area – cannot read, according to literacy council estimates. In Potter and Randall counties, 5,300 persons have not finished eighth grade, and 30,156 persons over 25 haven't graduated from high school, according to 1980 census figures.

"A lot of people simply don't believe or don't want to believe it is as bad as it is," said Terry Stewart, coordinator for the literacy council. "But it's as bad as statistics show."

Hinds said the figures are accurate even though many people think they don't know anyone illiterate.

Those with problems reading and writing have become proficient at hiding their deficiencies, she said. They get their news from television and develop work skills on the job. Some carry newspapers just to throw anyone suspecting a reading problem off the track, Hinds said.

Eventually, the problem does begin to hinder those who can't read.

They find they cannot advance in their jobs, Hinds said. They cannot read medication directions in emergency situations.

"Reading is essential to really enjoy a full life," she said. "I would want more for my family than what I could learn if I were illiterate."

Illiteracy also affects the country.

"At one time in American history, many, many adult Americans could not read above a certain level," Stewart said. "That was fine, at that time, because there were no requirements for them to read above that level.

"Today, it is a necessity because fewer and fewer unskilled jobs are part of the economy. More and more skilled labor is needed and, to learn those skills, a person has to read.

"The low reading level can't go on or else we're going to have a country that just grinds to a halt because we won't be able to compete with the rest of the world."

Illiteracy also takes other tolls.

The high illiteracy rate costs the country $225 billion each year in lost industrial productivity, unrealized tax revenues, welfare costs, prison costs and crime, according to figures from the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.

Fifty to 75 percent of all prison inmates in the United States have not completed high school, according to literacy council information.

"If you're going to pinpoint something that's causing lots and lots of different type problems in society," Stewart said, "you could very well trace it back to high illiteracy rates."

Many involved with the literacy movement believe the problem can be corrected. The Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council's goal is to wipe out local illiteracy by the year 2000, said Jeff Booth, president.

"Illiteracy is a severe problem and it started long ago," Stewart said.

"People can't believe it's as bad as it is. Well, perhaps it's not any worse than in 1890, but this is 1987 and it can't remain the same."

Feeling of helplessness turns to gusto

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

If you can read this newspaper article, you cannot comprehend the frustration and feeling of helplessness Drew "Boe" Harbour has felt most of his life.

Harbour, 33, an auto-body painter and repairman, is one of 23 million American adults classified as functionally illiterate, unable to read well enough to function successfully in today's society.

He also is one of 367 people in the Amarillo area trying to overcome illiteracy by enrolling in adult reading courses, according to figures from the local literacy council.

"It's hard to explain the feelings that are there," Harbour said. "There's not a word for it. . . . There's really no describing it to a person who doesn't have the handicap."

As a child, Harbour was placed in a special education class because he was diagnosed as having a reading disability.

"I really didn't belong in a regular classroom, but I didn't belong in special education class either," he sa[illegible]as kind of in between a rock and a hard place."

Various tutors tried to help Harbour learn to read but were unsuccessful.

"I guess I was just real young," he said. "I wouldn't say I didn't care. I guess I was just stubborn."

Eventually he did graduate from high school in Austin and then entered an auto-body repair training program offered by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

After a few years of working as an auto-body painter, Harbour decided he wanted to learn to read. He asked the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for help but was told he could not receive any assistance because he already was capable of working 40 hours a week.

"I needed to learn to read to move on to bigger and better things," he said. "You've got to help yourself. If you can't help yourself, who's going to help you. For someone with a reading disability, life is real hard."

On the job, Harbour's inability to read has caused problems. Mixing paint is vital to Harbour's trade, but whenever new paint products are developed, he must seek help in reading the mixing directions.

Life began to become a little easier for Harbour the night he saw a television program about illiteracy. He called the phone number given and about a month later started the tutoring program offered by the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

Harbour said he has learned a person can't be afraid to ask for help.

When the need for medical attention arises, Harbour completes as much of the standard medical information form as he can and then asks the receptionist's help on the parts he can't understand, he said.

"You don't try to hide the problem. If you hide it, you'll be worse off."

As an auto-body repairman, Harbour at times sees a decrease in his workload and must seek other jobs. Before he began learning to read, he would carry with him a sheet of paper with the typical application information written on it.

That way, he would match information on the sheet to words on the application to complete the form, he said.

"I have a lot of common sense."

Harbour's life has changed dramatically since he enrolled in reading classes nine months ago, he said. He is now in the third book of a four-book reading series.

"I feel like I'm accomplishing

AMARILLO SUNDAY NEWS-GLOBE
August 30, 1987

Literacy defined in various ways

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

Webster's Dictionary defines "literacy" as the ability to read and write.

A look at the volumes of information available on literacy quickly reveals many other ways to define literacy.

A 1981 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization report defines a literate person as one who can both read and write a short, simple statement about everyday life.

The National Health Survey defines literacy as reading ability comparable to that of the average school child entering the fourth grade.

The U.S. Department of Education currently defines literacy in terms of completing eight years of formal schooling but does not elaborate or qualify the quality of schooling or achievement test results.

Regardless of how literacy is measured, the statistics still come out about the same: one in five American adults cannot really read, says Terry Stewart, coordinator for the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

Commonly, experts say those reading below a fifth-grade level are functionally illiterate. In today's modern, high-tech society, a fifth-grade reading level doesn't open many doors.

The owners manual of a popular American car is written at the low-11th grade level, according to the car's manufacturer. Directions on three industrial cleaning products are written at the mid-eighth-grade level, the company that makes it says. A guide to Social Security benefits is written at the high-ninth grade level, Social Security officials say.

The New International Bible is written at the seventh-grade level, its publisher says, and the King James translation is written at the 12th-grade level. The U.S. Constitution requires an 11th-grade reading level to comprehend.

Most newspapers, including the Amarillo Globe-News papers, are written at the 10th-grade through 12th-grade levels, though some stories are written at lower levels.

For example: "Lt. Col. Oliver North, ending months of silence, testified today that he 'never personally discussed' the diversion of Iranian arms sales profits to Contra rebels with President Reagan. He said he assumed – without being told – that Reagan had approved" signals the beginning of a story written at the high-10th-grade level to low-12th-grade level, depending on the test, according to the Writer's Workbench computer system at Amarillo College.

"Ninety rapes were reported in Amarillo last year, and according to detectives, at least half could have been prevented" is written at the low-seventh-grade to mid-eighth-grade level, according to Writer's Workbench.

Stewart said someone who seeks help from the literacy council is given a special diagnostic inventory for placement at the appropriate level in the council's reading improvement curriculum.

Those troubled by such words as "is," "has" and "this" begin in the first book of the series, she said. Trouble with such words as "glass," "quick" and "dishes" puts a student at the second level.

Such words as "flight," "money" and "zero" represent the third level. The diagnostic list for the fourth level includes words such as "cough," "choose" and "beautiful."

Those who can read above the fourth level are encouraged to enroll in a more advanced remedial reading program such as those offered by Amarillo College, Stewart said.

She said it is rare to find someone completely illiterate. Most people who come to the literacy council for help begin in the first or second book of the series, she said.

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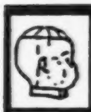
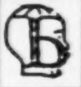
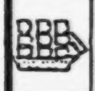
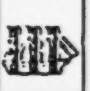
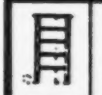
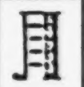
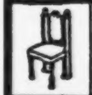
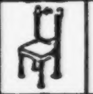
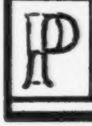
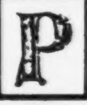
The Ameruss chart at right gives readers an idea of the feeling an illiterate person experiences when he first begins learning to read. Each column of the chart, written in Russian, builds on the previous one. The first column shows a picture of a boy. The second column associates the sound of the English letter "b" with the picture. The third shows the letter, and the fourth shows the Russian word for "boy." In the fifth column, the sentence "This is a boy" is written.
The key word for the second row is ship, the third is ladder, the fourth is chair and the fifth is rope.

		БОЙ Б	Б Б	ДИС ИЗ А БОЙ.
		ШИП Ш	Ш Ш	ДИС ИЗ А ШИП.
		ЛАДР Л	Л Л	ДИС ИЗ А ЛАДР
		ЧЭР Ч	Ч Ч	ДИС ИЗ А ЧЭР.
		РОП Р	Р Р	ДИС ИЗ А РОП.

Laubach Way to Reading

Diagnostic Inventory LWR Screening List

List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4
1. in	1. glass	1. cry	1. about
2. is	2. send	2. loaf	2. bought
3. the	3. dropped	3. die	3. shook
4. a	4. far	4. flight	4. gentle
5. to	5. running	5. eleven	5. cough
6. has	6. after	6. future	6. thumb
7. her	7. quick	7. menu	7. weigh
8. this	8. girls	8. money	8. schedule
9. she	9. then	9. retire	9. wrong
10. his	10. hurry	10. short	10. pressure
	11. which	11. snow	11. league
	12. were	12. table	12. excuse
	13. dishes	13. zero	13. annoy
	14. work	14. sleep	14. choose
	15. from	15. paint	15. ache
			16. crawl
			17. beautiful
			18. hour
			19. above
			20. argue

Kari Fluegel, Globe-News education writer, spent several weeks looking into the problem of illiteracy in the Amarillo area.

FLUEGEL

Fluegel is a 1981 graduate of Tascosa High School. She attended Amarillo College, receiving an associate degree in 1983, and Texas A&M University, receiving a bachelor's degree in 1985.

At AC and Texas A&M, Fluegel worked on the student newspapers as staff writer and editor. She was named Outstanding Sophomore Journalism Major at AC and an Outstanding Graduating Senior Journalism Major at A&M.

She has been employed by the Globe-News since May 1985 and has covered the education beat since January 1986.

Fluegel earlier this year received the Human Relations Committee Award from the Amarillo Classroom Teachers Association.

AMARILLO SUNDAY NEWS-GLOBE
August 30, 1987

Illiteracy Caused By Many Factors

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Education Writer

Trying to pinpoint a cause for the epidemic numbers of functional illiterates in the United States is impossible, says Terry Stewart, coordinator of the Amarillo Adult Literacy Council.

The more one tries to pinpoint a single factor, the longer the list becomes, she said.

"The more I'm around it, the more I realize if you try to attach fault, you're just wasting your time."

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 23 million Americans cannot read well enough to function successfully in today's world.

Twenty-three million can't read a prescription bottle, a daily newspaper, a recipe or a job application.

In the Texas Panhandle, 68,000 adults, one of five people in the Amarillo area, fall into that category, according to literacy council estimates.

Among the 23 million people across the nation, the reasons why they can't read are many.

A family could have financial problems, which results in a child dropping out of school to help with money matters. Another child could have health problems and miss so much school he cannot catch up.

The simple frustration of learning to read has turned some students off reading and school, said Jan Hinds, ACcess reading instructor at Amarillo College. AC's ACcess Division provides special developmental courses and support services including remedial reading instruction.

Low literacy levels also can be influenced by stress at home, such as that caused by divorce or by a family excessively mobile during the early school years, Hinds said.

Jeff Booth, literacy council president, said he does not place the blame in any single place.

"There are so many factors, number one being the individual himself and that something that caused him to fall behind," he said.

One factor that usually does not come into play is intellectual ability, Stewart said.

"If they were stupid they wouldn't have been able to hide it for so long. Their intelligence levels usually have very little to do with why they can't read."

On the other hand, one element that usually is present is a lack of reinforcement of reading at home.

"They don't see mom and dad reading, so they don't read," Hinds said. "Illiterates breed illiterates."

Many people blame the public school system for the country's high illiteracy rate.

Dr. Terry Grier, Amarillo Independent School District superintendent, said such a charge is a two-edged sword – both fair and unfair.

"We are charged with educating children," he said.

Children come with different learning capabilities, but "I believe all children can learn and all teachers can teach," Grier said.

Grier also said teachers can make a difference in the battle against illiteracy.

The unfair side of the issue is that education is a partnership between the schools, parents and the community, Grier said.

"Educating children and correcting societies' ills can't be the sole responsibility of the schools."

Schools need to have the funding to decrease class size and parents need to set hours for television viewing and encourage reading, he said.

Hinds said she believes the public school system tries to address too many subjects too soon.

According to state mandates, students in first and second grade must spend time learning reading, writing, health, physical education, fine arts, including art, music and drama, math, science and social studies, including economy, history and geography.

"The curriculum in the lower grades is too full," she said. "When they get a little older, let them get . . . all that stuff."

Grier, however, said he hopes teachers teach reading no matter what subject the class is discussing.

"Reading is the foundation it all rests upon," he said. "All teachers are 'reading teachers.' I think if we assume that philosophy, we'll all be better off."

Grier also said he sees a direct connection between literacy problems and the school dropout problem now affecting the country. Students who have problems reading don't stay in school, he said.

"Reading is the key to success. I believe kids that can't read, can't succeed. At the same time, those who can read, but don't are not better than those who can't."

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Monday. August 31, 1987

Television: Friend And Foe of Fight

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Education Writer

Television has become both a friend and a foe to the literacy movement in the United States.

Many experts blame television for encouraging low literacy levels, but still look to it for help in reaching the estimated 23 million functional illiterates.

In one commercial, a young father attempts to read "The Little Engine that Could" to his tiny daughter. He struggles over each word while the girl gazes up into his face, feeling her father's frustration.

"That's not even a made-up situation," said Terry Stewart, coordinator for the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council. "That's real."

Such emotional appeals have resulted in more volunteers joining the ranks of those fighting illiteracy and have encouraged those who can't read to seek help.

Television has not had a strong effect on those functional illiterates 50 years old or older, Stewart said. For those younger, however, it's a different story.

"TV contributes (to illiteracy), but it's not the cause," said Jeff Booth, president of the literacy council.

Stewart agreed.

"What TV has done is kept the reading level down," she said. "It made sure that instead of picking up a book, they turn on the television."

The average middle-school-age child watches television for about seven hours each day, and reads for pleasure about five minutes each day, she said.

"TV is there to enhance our lives, not lead our lives."

Jan Hinds, ACcess reading coordinator at Amarillo College, said that because of television and other activities, such as after-school sports, children no longer read for pleasure.

"And the only way to get to be a good reader is to practice," she said.

Between the ages of 6 and 18, children and teen-agers watch an average of 18,000 hours of TV as compared to 15,000 hours spent in school, according to information from the Business Council for Effective Literacy.

General managers for four Amarillo television stations say blaming television for promoting low literacy may be an unfair charge.

"I think people who say that are looking for an easy target," said Mike Lee of KFDA.

"Television is one of a thousand things that keeps a child from reading if he does not have proper direction from his parents."

Ray Poindexter of KAMR also said that parental supervision is important.

"A child will watch TV to the degree parents will let them watch it," he said.

Fred Hutching of KCIT, however, admits that the time devoted to read now is less and less because of the abundance of leisure activities such as driving, bike riding and watching television.

Poindexter noted that television helps educate the public instead of limiting the public.

"I think television opens up a world of situations that most people never see except for television," he said.

Poindexter also added that his station does everything it can to promote reading. During a recent "For Kids' Sake" project, KAMR anchors and news crews set up a mini-news desk for children at local libraries.

"The theme was to get them to keep reading," he said.

Television possibly has helped improve literacy, said Jim McCormick of KVII.

"Television helps educate people," he said. "Kids today are so far ahead of where I was at that age."

That power and popularity of the electronic media is what literacy advocates are counting on to help turn the country's illiteracy problem around, since written sources such as newspapers and magazines will not reach the illiterate population.

Last year, the Public Broadcasting Service and ABC, of which KVII is an affiliate, launched a joint program called Project Literacy U.S. or PLUS. The networks aired special news reports, documentaries and movies addressing illiteracy.

"It has encouraged (illiterates) to go and seek help. It'll make it less humiliating or degrading to go ask for help." McCormick said.

The success of PLUS thus far has resulted in the two networks renewing their commitment for another year.

Hutching, however, said television should not be the only medium used to combat the problem.

"Radio, TV, newspaper, word of mouth, all have to assist in filling the void," he said.

PLUS and other similar projects have helped tremendously in increasing public awareness, Booth said.

"It's an enormous problem. . . . The problem in the community is convincing the community that the problem is that big. The problem with those who can't read is convincing them they can overcome it."

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Monday, August 31, 1987

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Children Polled Think Reading Is Important

Youth today consider reading important, according to 35 Amarillo students polled by the Amarillo Globe-News, but few questioned say they read often.

"There are too many other things to do," said Heather Friant, 13, an eighth-grade student at Fannin Junior High.

Of those polled, riding bicycles, talking on the telephone, sleeping, playing with computers, participating in sports and watching television take priority over reading a book.

Some do read, however, and read a lot.

"I read all the time," said Katrina Ford, 14, a ninth-grader at Horace Mann Junior High. "I think it's enjoyable. . . . I read all kinds of books, something that I can get my hands on that's interesting."

Nancy Mendez, 12, a seventh-grade student at Bowie Junior High, said she reads for about 1½ hours whenever she finds the time.

"It's fun reading," she said. "It makes you feel like you're in the story. It's exciting."

Joe Mende, 15, freshman at Fannin, said he reads at least an hour every day. He reads newspapers and magazines, but not many books.

"Reading keeps your mind in tune," he said.

All but four of the 35 students polled said they watch television more than they read, much more.

"It's not as hard. You just sit and listen," said Maura Young, 12, a seventh-grader at Fannin Junior High.

Leann Dowdy, 13, a Fannin eighth-grader, said school has taken some of the fun out of reading for her.

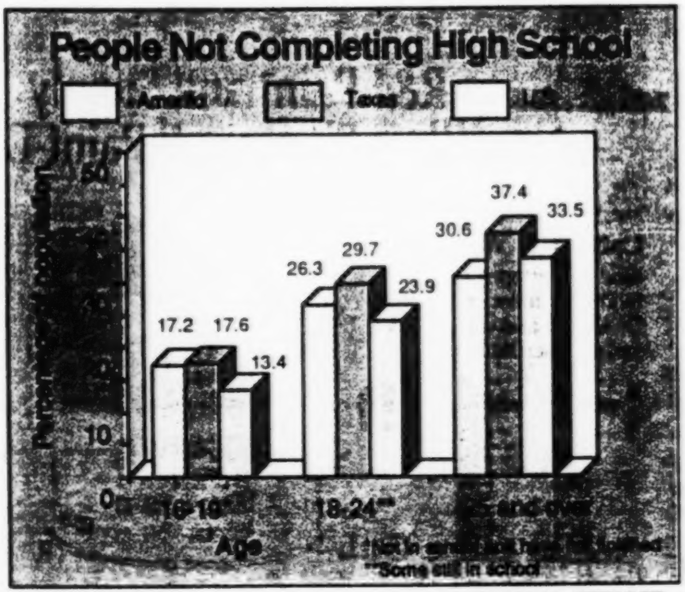
"We read too much in school," she said. "You don't like to do it anymore."

For Robert Quartarero, 10, a fourth-grade student at Wolflin Elementary School, the excitement of reading hasn't worn off. Reading has, in fact, become more exciting in recent years.

"Now I know how to read more," he said.

Whether or not they read often, all students surveyed said knowing how to read is important.

"If you don't read, you can't learn anything," Mende said.



Source: 1980 Census

Graphic by STEWART

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Monday, August 31, 1987

Industry Officials: Illiteracy Is Not A Big Problem Yet

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Education Writer

Low reading levels could begin to hamper the nation's industrial growth, but illiteracy in the workplace, though it does exist, has not yet become a big problem locally, according to area industry spokesmen.

"It has more of a personal impact," said Chuck Speed, director of personnel for the City of Amarillo.

The city employs about 1,400 people at the high point of the year and several are functionally illiterate, Speed said. The city, however, does not track the literacy rates of its workers and does not have statistics on the number of non-readers employed.

Men and women who can't read or write could be employed for entry level jobs in a variety of areas – maintenance, custodial services, refuse collection – where oral instructions would suffice, but some cannot move beyond that point, Speed said.

"A lot of potential careers have been stopped."

Cleotis McNealy, city sanitation superintendent, said he has several workers in his department who can't read. Some ask for help in situations where they need to read, but others try to hide their handicap, he said.

McNealy also said he sees no difference in the number of work-related accidents or on-the-job productivity between laborers who can and can't read.

"They take orders and when you show them what to do, they perform well," he said.

Ray Wodaszewski, Iowa Beef Processors plant manager, and Dan Smoots, IBP director of personnel, said illiteracy is a major problem in industry even though the percentage of the 2,200 local IBP employees functionally illiterate is low.

"In my estimation, illiteracy is a catastrophic problem," Wodaszewski said. "In all of industry, it's criminal."

Problems sometimes arise in on-the-job communications. For example, if a worker is illiterate he can't read a work schedule, check a time card or read company policies and procedures, Wodaszewski said.

Overall, "It's a manageable problem," he said.

Smoots said IBP does not solicit nor does it deny employment to low-level readers, and when a low-level reader is discovered, plant officials encourage that individual to seek training.

In the construction business, illiteracy is present but is not a major problem, said Gary Strickland, president of Reid & Gary Strickland Construction Co.

"Maybe it's the type of work," he said.

"They don't use reading. They work with their hands and their backs."

Instructions can be given to workers verbally, and new skills are taught by demonstration. Those just entering the field start with low skills and gradually grow into the job, he said.

On the whole, a non-reader can manage very well in the construction business, Strickland said.

"Reading is not needed in the field, even though I think they could enjoy life better being able to read," he said.

A person who could not read could get hired in entry level positions at Owens-Corning Fiberglas, but would not be able to advance within the company, said Lou Cimini, personnel manager.

"You have to be able to think and analyze," he said.

Even though positions could be available for a non-reader, Owens-Corning has a high education rate among its 875 employees. Ninety percent of the company's employees have a high school diploma or general education diploma (GED), Cimini said.

Gary Kelley, manager of human resources at Bell Helicopter, said it would be virtually impossible for an illiterate to be hired by his company.

All employees must complete a battery of forms to apply for a job before being hired, and once hired, they must complete more paperwork.

"It would be immediately obvious if a person couldn't read," Kelley said. "It would be next to impossible to fake your way through the system."

The company takes such strides to insure literacy because workers must be able to work from blue prints and technical written instructions.

"I don't think an illiterate could survive in our world of high technology," he said.

> **'I don't think an illiterate could survive in our world of high technology.'**

Illiteracy/Unemployment Correlation

Texas counties with less than 11% **and more** than 45% of the population aged 18 years and older who left school before completing the 9th grade

County	% of 18-yr-olds with 0-8 years	Unemployment rate, Dec. '86
Randall	5.50%	5.0%
Coryell	8.07	5.5
Denton	8.40	6.4
King	8.62	4.4
Travis	10.31	6.1
Brazos	10.39	6.2
Collin	10.43	5.2
Hartley	10.89	3.6
Roberts	10.97	4.0
Presidio	45.47	17.4
Dimmitt	45.58	20.5
Maverick	50.09	30.0
Kenedy	50.12	2.7*
Willacy	50.42	18.3
La Salle	52.16	13.9
Starr	55.13	44.2
Zavala	55.74	22.5

*County with workforce of only 480 persons.
Source: 1980 U.S. Census/Texas Employment Commission

Graphic by McCarthy

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Tuesday, September 1, 1987

Illiteracy Exacts Large Expense On U.S. Society

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Education Writer

Illiteracy exacts financial costs in the United States, as well as takes a toll on human dignity.

Information from the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council says the country's high illiteracy rate – 20 percent of all American adults are believed to be functionally illiterate – costs $225 billion each year in lost industrial productivity, unrealized tax revenues, welfare and prison costs and crime.

"It's already hurt this country, and it will continue to hurt this country," said Terry Stewart, coordinator for the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

More than a third of American mothers who receive welfare are illiterate, according to literacy council statistics. And the percentage of people with less than six years education who receive public assistance is double those with 6-8 years of education and four times those with at least some high school education.

"It's costing all of us," said Jeff Booth, president of the literacy council. "It's very expensive to us as a society to have someone who is illiterate."

As the country makes the transition from an industrial nation to a technical nation, it is feared the United States could lose its place as an economic leader if illiteracy goes unchecked.

"Corporate America must realize this is a pocketbook issue," William F. Willis, general manager of the Tennessee Valley Authority, said during a recent national teleconference broadcast locally through Amarillo College.

"We're in the middle of the pack. We're going to have to sprint to get to the finish line with the others."

Another price paid is that of reduced safety among workers who can't read and those they work beside, Stewart said.

"The real problem is not only can't functional illiterates read a menu, they also can't read danger signs and warnings signs," she said.

"That all comes out to human cost, to the individual who is harmed by his inability to read and to all those around him who are harmed."

The problem doesn't seem to be lessening. Figures from the literacy council estimate 13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States are functionally illiterate and cannot read or write well enough to successfully function in daily life. That 13 percent one day will be part of the primary workforce.

"It's going to get worse," Stewart said.

Because a person can't read, finding work becomes increasingly difficult and frustration begins to build. Often such an individual releases that frustration through crime, Stewart said.

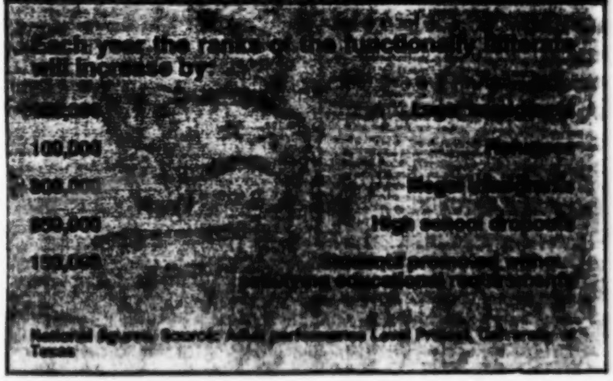
Up to 75 percent of all prison inmates in the United States have not completed high school, according to literacy council information.

Illiteracy also lowers self-esteem and self-confidence, Stewart said. There is a stigma attached to nonreaders that for many results in acute embarrassment and shame.

"Everybody can read, we believe," Stewart said. "You don't want to go against a crowd because that draws attention to you."

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Tuesday, September 1, 1987

Growing Number of Functional Illiterates



There Is a Story Behind Every Case of Illiteracy

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

Behind the mountains of statistics collected on the country's illiterate are 23 million adults who cannot read or write well enough to function successfully.

Each has his own story.

They are the parents who cannot read a bedtime story to a young child. They are workers who can't fill out job applications, housewives who can't read a recipe, and teens who drop out of school and sometimes turn to crime.

One mother, according to Jeff Booth, president of the Amarillo Area Literacy Council, has a recurring nightmare that her baby swallows a poisonous household cleaner, but she is unable to help the child because she can't read the directions for the antidote.

In Potter and Randall counties, more than 30,000 adults over 25 have not completed high school, according to the 1980 U.S. Census.

Illiteracy plays no favorites. The number of male functional illiterates is comparable to the number of female illiterates.

The majority of the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council students are Caucasian, but blacks, Hispanics and a few Asian / Pacific Islanders also have sought out help, according to council figures. Many are employed, but many are not. Some have completed high school. Others have dropped out.

One of five American adults can't read, but most others can't name someone functionally illiterate.

"We don't know because these people are real savvy on how to hide it because it is such an embarrassment," said Terry Stewart, coordinator for the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

Functional illiterates often hide their problem because of the typical reaction from the rest of society.

"It's remarks like 'What are you stupid? What do you mean you can't read? Everybody can read,' " Stewart said. "We all take reading for granted. Society tends to perhaps be a bit inadvertently cruel.

"That's usually the equation – If you can't read you're stupid – but I've discovered that in most of our cases that is not true. If they were stupid they wouldn't have been able to hide it for so long."

People can hide their inability to read many ways, but it usually catches up with them in emergency situations when they can't read instructions on medication or can't pass a driver's test, Stewart said.

"Usually something happens or something stands in their way that they can't bluff around."she said.

Some have specific motivations for learning to read.

"A lot just want to read the Bible," she said.

"They have the desire to read their child a bedtime story," Booth said, "the desire to read the want ads, the desire to cook from recipes, the desire to further their career. Some are just wanting to overcome the stigma and shame attached to not being able to read."

According to information from the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council, most adult students are frightened, but creative and adaptable.

They are uneven learners, at times quick to pick up new words, but slow on other days. Adult nonreaders also are insecure and fear failure, but continually growing as a literate person.

Functional illiterates also are lonely, Booth said.

"They feel like they're the only ones who can't read."

Reaching out for help is one of the hardest steps a non-reader must take, but that will not be the only battle fought, the experts say.

Learning to read is often not easy for adults, Stewart said, so many need the intensive one-on-one help a tutoring system provides.

"It's a difficult thing to learn how to read when you're older," she said. "When you are younger, you're ripe. You're ready. You're absorbing all the time."

Still, illiteracy is a handicap that can be overcome.

"If they want to change, we can help them," Booth said.

'We all take reading for granted.

Society tends to perhaps be a bit inadvertently cruel.'

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Wednesday, September 2, 1987

2 Find Accomplishment In Overcoming Illiteracy

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

Terry Polley, 29, works in a packing house. She didn't like school as a child and quit in the eighth grade. Now she has a small son to whom she would like to read a bedtime story but has a hard time doing so.

Kathy Owens, 28, works in a local restaurant. She was labeled dyslexic as a child, placed in a special education program and received social promotions through school. She graduated but couldn't read. Now, she wants to be more independent.

Both women are among the estimated 23 million functionally illiterate Americans, but both are doing something about it. They are learning to read.

"I've been wanting to read forever," Polley said one night before she began her weekly lesson.

Polley entered the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council's program three months ago. She now is studying in the second book of a four-book reading series and plans to complete the program.

"I look forward to coming every Thursday night," she said.

Polley said she has been able to hide her inability to read because she has a knack for being able to understand the gist of a sentence without being able to read all the words.

Now, as she is learning to read, Polley has the support of her husband, her son and her mother, who also is learning how to read through the literacy council.

Being able to read is important, especially on the job, Polley said.

"You could really mess up some things."

Polley has had several jobs in which she did not need to know how to read, but now she wants a better job.

"To get a better job, you have to have more school," she said, "and to get more schooling, you have to learn how to read."

For Owens, learning to read has expanded her world in many more ways than just through the written word. She wanted to become more independent and has done so. She's also happier, more self-assured and more outgoing.

Recently, she needed to make a written request for a deposit refund. She wrote the letter and received her money.

"I've come a long way," she said. "Sometimes I'll fall down, but I'll get back up."

Owens has been enrolled in the literacy council's program for almost two years, and now she is in the fourth and final book of the reading series.

"I feel good inside," she said. "It feels good inside when something you thought you couldn't do, all the time you could do it."

One of the hard parts of not being able to read is having to cope with those who find out about her inability, Owens said.

"They treat me like a kid. It makes me feel small, but now I feel tall."

Owens also said she now copes with the world better.

"It's a real change," she said. "I've always been put in a corner because I couldn't do things. I feel like a person now.

"There's a lot of people out there like me, and they can do it too. They just have to have self-confidence."

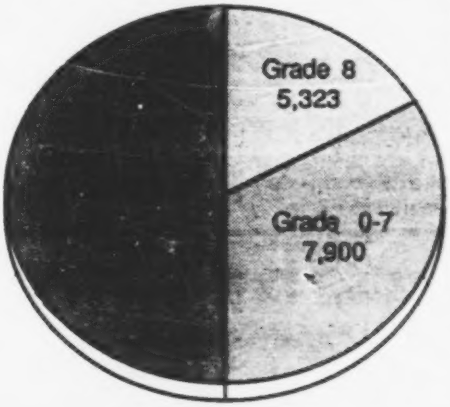
The Sky's the Limit!
Adult
Literacy
Council
371-5435

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Wednesday, September 2, 1987

Highest Grade Completed

For Potter and Randall counties

30,156 people have not graduated from high school



Population of Potter and Randall counties is 160,380

Graphic by McCarthy

Reading Tutors Preach 'Each One Teach One'

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

"Each one teach one" is a motto Gisele Early and Avyce Whigham believe in.

The phrase encourages each person who can read to tutor a person who can't, and that's precisely what Early and Whigham are doing.

Both women are tutoring students through the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

"Reading enables people to help themselves," said Early, a local engineer. "It opens new worlds for them."

Early has worked with the literacy council for two years. The student she now tutors is her third and her most successful.

"The responsibility is on her shoulders," Early said. "It's not like I can force her to think."

Early said working with the literacy council is a personal type of volunteering that fits into her schedule. The real reason she tutors, however, is because she thinks reading is worthwhile.

"It's great to see someone understand," she said. "I know that's building a foundation she can use for the rest of her life."

Whigham, 80, is a former first-grade teacher. Because of her experience in the classroom, she is a natural to teach adults how to read, she said.

"It's been the most satisfying thing I've done, even more than teaching first grade."

Whigham has always taught reading by phonics – the sounding out of words and syllables – even during the time when many educators believed the phonetical approach was inappropriate.

"There's no other way to teach reading," she said.

Whigham has worked with her first and current student for almost two years. During that time, they have developed an extremely close relationship. The two go to social gatherings and celebrate special events together.

Kathy Owens, Whigham's student, said the pair have almost a mother-daughter relationship.

Whigham said she plans to stick with Kathy until she finishes her education, then she will take on another student.

Whigham said she would like to see more educators volunteer to teach an adult to read because they are already familiar with teaching concepts.

"You think nothing is more exciting than seeing a 6-year-old learn to read," she said. "This is better."

'It's been the most satisfying thing I've done, even more than teaching first grade.'

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Thursday, September 3, 1987

Council Carries Literacy Flag Into Battle

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe News Staff Writer

The Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council is carrying the flag into battle in the local fight against illiteracy.

"Our role is to locate and educate functionally illiterate adults in the area," said Terry Stewart, council coordinator.

According to council estimates, more than 68,000 adults in the Panhandle area are functionally illiterate. So far, only one-half of 1 percent of those have come forward to receive help.

"We are trying very hard to reach out to those individual who are still silent in their literacy," Stewart said.

Once a person needing help contacts the literacy council, he or she is screened and matched with a tutor. The tutor and a student establish a meeting time and begin work in the reading series. The program is self-paced, and all literacy council services are free and confidential.

The Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council was established in 1984 by Amarillo College in cooperation with Region XVI Education Service Center and the Texas Panhandle Library System through a one-year grant from the Texas Education Agency.

The Sky's the Limit!

Adult Literacy Council
371-5435

The council is affiliated with AC only administratively. AC gives no money to the council, but does provide office space and some administrative help. It also gives Stewart, an AC English teacher, release time from the class load to work with the council.

"The school is letting us house here and is giving us whatever help it can without giving out dollars," Stewart said. "We are still in real need."

The council is governed by a board made up of 19 community members. The board's primary job now is to raise money for the literacy efforts – it costs $350 to teach one adult to read – and to serve as a support group for the tutors, said Jeff Booth, board president.

"They're the ones that are doing the job."

The council's main fund-raiser is the annual Lobsterfest. The 1987 Lobsterfest, held last week, brought in more than $9,000.

The council also has received help from several civic groups, including South Amarillo Rotary Club, Downtown Kiwanis Club, Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority alumni and the Junior League of Amarillo.

Though the council has had some hard times financially, both Stewart and Booth say the group has been successful.

More than 350 people have been trained as tutors and 367 have signed up for courses. Since 1984, seven people have completed the reading series, which takes about two years to finish, and Booth said the graduation rate soon is expected to begin to accelerate.

The Amarillo organization has been named as one of the best literacy councils in the state and has been recognized by Laubach Reading International, the organization which provides the reading series used by local tutors.

"I am extremely proud of the council's success," Stewart said. "Over the last few years we have managed to keep an operation going that has been difficult to keep going.

"We've reach a lot of students. We've reached a large part of the community, and we've truly helped some individuals learn to read."

Council Schedules Workshops

The Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council this fall will host three workshops to prepare volunteer tutors to work with students.

Volunteers should be prepared to work one to two hours each week.

This month's workshop will begin Tuesday and continue on Wednesday and Sept. 11. Classes will meet at 5:30 p.m. and will last until 9 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday and until 8:30 p.m. on Sept. 11.

In October, the workshop will be Oct. 12, 14 and 16. Class will start at 12:30 p.m. all three days and will end at 4 p.m. Oct. 12 and 14 and at 3:30 p.m. Oct. 16.

The series in November will be from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. Nov. 20 and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 21.

All sessions will meet in Badger Den of the College Union Building.

For more information, contact the Adult Literacy Council.

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Thursday, September 3, 1987

Literacy Advocates Set 2000 as Goal To End Problem

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe News Staff Writer

Wiping out illiteracy by the year 2000 may seem like an over-ambitious goal, but it's a goal that can be attained, many literacy advocates say.

About 20 percent of American adults cannot read or write well enough to be fully functional in today's society, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Education.

Illiteracy costs more than $225 billion each year in lowered industrial productivity, unrealized tax revenues, welfare and prison costs and crime, according to figures from the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.

The battle to attain a fully literate society must begin now, say literacy officials.

"It can be done if we get enough illiterates to come forward and have enough tutors to train them," said Jeff Booth, president of the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

"Anyone who can read and write can be a tutor. The momentum is there."

More than 360 students have sought help through the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council since its inception in 1984. More than 350 have joined the local literacy battle as tutors.

To help battle low literacy levels in the schools, many districts have begun stressing reading.

Amarillo Independent School District has emphasized reading and writing priorities in its three-year plan and offers a special program to improve reading skills for low-level students in first through third grade.

AISD also is developing a model of "Write to Read" – a program that promotes reading and writing skills through the use of a computer – at one elementary school.

The philosophy behind the program is "Anything a child can say, he can write; Anything he can write, he can read; Anything he can read, he can comprehend," said Dy DeFever, AISD coordinator of elementary instruction.

"Literacy is important because literacy gives you the advantage to utilize the vast resources to continue lifelong learning," said AISD Superintendent Terry Grier. "We want people to be able to continue to learn.

"There's a misperception that when you finish school, learning stops. It continues all through life."

Highland Park Independent School District offers a special summer reading program each year to help low-achieving students.

"During the school year we have so many other subjects to cover, we can't give reading a priority," said Ann Molesworth, the program's coordinator. "In the summertime you don't have to concentrate on any other subjects."

The Bushland Independent School District is instituting the Write to Read program, and next year will put a summer remedial reading program in place, Superintendent David Jones said.

Superintendent Aubrey Spear Jr. said the River Road Independent School District is looking into several options to supplement the district's current reading program and will implement a new program to help dyslexic students learn to read.

Canyon schools have a number of reading programs and promote reading through incentives and activities such as read-a-thons, said Vondean McGregor, principal of Arden Road Elementary School and former CISD director of elementary curriculum.

The state also is joining the game. State law requires all school districts in Texas to offer remedial reading programs, and state officials are currently in the process of establishing a 17-member state literacy council.

The state council, approved in July, has been charged with studying the problem.

Across the nation, the literacy movement is getting stronger and is drawing such public figures as Barbara Bush, wife of vice president George Bush, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton and Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

Even though the literacy movement has a good momentum, the battle will not be successful if those who can't read can't be persuaded to seek help.

"That's not an easy phone call to make," Booth said. "Very, very few of them want to tell anyone they can't read. . . . They've gotten by without a lot of people knowing."

But optimism is high, Booth said.

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Friday, September 4, 1987

See Nan. See Nan Run. Read of Nan.

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

COMMENTARY

One of my earliest memories is about Nan, a man and a dog.

Nan was running after the dog and a man was running after Nan. I don't remember if Nan ever caught the dog, but I do know that pointless little tale was the start of something good.

See, Nan, the man and the dog were all characters in the first reading primer I ever opened.

I remember that book well. It was red with a black taped binding. Nan wore a faded red dress; the dog was brown and white, and the man was bald.

From Nan, I moved up to Curious George – still a favorite – and from Curious George to Martha Washington. After Martha, came Laura Ingalls, and after Laura, Betsy, Tacy and Tib came into the picture. They all became friends.

I spent hours upon hours tucked into a corner escaping from my problems into a world of fantasy and make-believe. I got into trouble more times that I can count by ignoring my chores until "I get to the end of the next chapter."

This summer, however, I met several people who aren't acquainted with Laura, Curious George or even Nan and the man. They are only acquainted with a world of frustration, where books are a symbol of struggle.

One night I watched a tutoring session. A young woman, older than I am, struggled as she tried to distinguished the difference between the vowel sounds in "sin" and "sun," and between "bit" and but."

What came natural to me, and many fifth-graders, was a struggle for her.

On the way home, I tried to pretend I couldn't read, but I couldn't do it. Words jumped off signs and into my brain without any help. I looked at a book in a foreign language. That didn't work either. Even if I didn't know what they meant, I could still sound out the words. The frustration factor just wasn't there.

For an estimated 23 million Americans who can't read, frustration is part of their daily existence.

Imagine the terror of waking from a dream in which you watched your child die because you couldn't read the antidote to a poison he or she had swallowed.

Imagine the embarrassment of being handed a job application and having to ask a friend for help completing it.

Imagine the humiliation of hearing the words "What? You can't read? A first-grader can read. Are you dumb or something?"

Imagine not being able to look up a telephone number.

One in five American adults read at or below a fifth-grade level. It is a statistic hard to believe. Maybe the estimates are too high. Maybe this silent epidemic is not as widespread as many believe.

But then, in a progressive society, one person who can't read is a tragedy.

'In a progressive society,

one person who can't read is a tragedy.'

AMARILLO NEWS-GLOBE
Friday, September 4, 1987

AMARILLO SUNDAY NEWS-GLOBE
OCTOBER 25, 1987 **21-A**

Goal of wiping out illiteracy closer after media campaign

By KARI FLUEGEL
Globe-News Staff Writer

Wiping out adult illiteracy in the Amarillo area by the year 2000 is a goal that seems to be moving faster into the grasp of the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council.

The literacy council has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students and tutors making contact with the council in September and October, said Barbara Johnson, council secretary.

Prior to that time, the council signed up an average of eight to 10 students a month. Now, it is receiving an average of two new students per day, she said.

Much of the growth is being attributed to the efforts of the news media, both print and electronic, to focus the spotlight on a problem affecting one out of five American adults.

More than 23 million Americans cannot read or write well enough to function successfully in today's society, according to council statistics. They cannot read newspapers, cookbooks, prescriptions, street signs or job applications.

Earlier this year, the Amarillo Sunday News-Globe and the Amarillo Globe-Times published a six-day series highlighting the alarming statistics and the personal stories behind illiteracy.

Since that time, ABC and the Public Broadcasting Service have continued their efforts in the Project Literacy U.S. campaign with various television programs and public service announcements.

Local television stations also have run several announcements promoting the efforts of the local literacy council.

Since the local media effort began, 60 new tutors were certified and 40 new students have enrolled, Johnson said.

The council has been contacted by 150 prospective tutors and 55 prospective students, she said.

Forty of the prospective tutors said their contact with the council was spurred by the combined media efforts, Johnson said.

Of the 55 prospective students, five attributed their decision to contact the council to a word list used as the diagnostic instrument for placing students in the Laubach reading program that was published in the newspaper, she said.

Another called after seeing the picture of Drew Harbour, auto-body painter and literacy council student, Johnson said. The individual who called also is an auto-body painter and was encouraged by Harbour's accomplishments.

Another new student who saw the newspaper articles lives outside the Amarillo area and makes an hourlong drive twice a week to receive tutoring.

"It (the media attention) is letting us reach people we have not been able to reach before," she said.

The council also has had to drastically increase the number of reading workbooks it orders. Johnson said she has ordered more than $1,000 worth of materials for students and teachers since the media push began.

And calls for the council's speakers bureau have become more frequent, she said.

Even with the encouraging number of people seeking help, the goal of wiping out illiteracy is an ambitious one. It also is a goal that will be reached one person at a time.

"Most people that call the council just have such a thankful tone in their voice because they have finally found someone to help them," Johnson said. "It's just opened so many doors for us and these people."

TELEVISION

Al Tompkins and Gil Hollingsworth
WSMV in Nashville (TN)
1987
A series titled "Making the Grade" and a 30-minute talk show

WSMV submitted a four-part series that aired on the 6 p.m. newscasts and a half-hour primetime talk show on illiteracy in Tennessee.

The series examined Tennessee spending on adult education in comparison with other states. The state also has more adults who cannot read than almost every other state. WSMV News undertook adult education as a major project in 1987 as a result.

The newscast series examined a wide range of subjects, including portraits of individuals and why they had not learned to read. It resulted in more than 200 adults enrolling in basic education classes. Dozens of volunteers signed up to teach.

The prime time half-hour talk show featured teachers, a Congressman and some of the subjects introduced to viewers in the news series.

TELEVISION

David E. Green
KVII-TV in Amarillo, Texas
November 17-20, 1987
"Can't You Read the Signs"

KVII-TV's entry is a four-part series developed as an effort to highlight Amarillo's severe unnoted problem of illiteracy.

Part 1 reports on the illiteracy problem in the Texas Panhandle.

Part 2 concentrates on individuals and how illiteracy impacts on their lives. It includes interviews with an illiterate man and his family demonstrating the lengths one will go to to hide his disability.

Part 3 covers the Amarillo Area Adult Literacy Council and efforts to solve the problem. It gives a first hand look at the Laubach method of reading and how motivated people are to learn.

Part 4 describes the efforts being made in the education system to keep illiteracy to a minimum and what the general public and businesses can do to help their community solve the problems that are coming to light.

RADIO

Roger Nelson, Mike Conklin, Connie McDougall, Bill Schwartz, Narda Ferrell, Stan Orchard, Lan Archer, Patti Pague, Judy Bradford and Gina Tuttle
KOMO Radio and TV in Seattle (WA)
September 7-11, 1987
"Illiteracy Focus"

The KOMO station entry is a series of short installments aired the week of September 7, 1987. The eleven segments touch on virtually every aspect of illiteracy. Who is affected? What are the consequences? Can the nation find a solution?

- What do we mean by "illiteracy?" What does society expect of its citizens today that was not expected 100 years ago?
- Are reading classes a luxury for those so poor they must focus on survival first?
- Refugees and immigrants need to learn English as a new language. Are bi-lingual programs necessary if the newcomers are to make the transition from one culture to another?
- How soon should traditional reading and writing methods be introduced to children? Do they interfere with a child's natural growth towards literacy?
- Can it all be done in the classroom? How important is parental involvement? What does parental involvement mean?
- Studies show 13% of the American adult workforce is illiterate. Will it get worse? What is the solution? Offering a "literacy hot-line", this segment invites citizens to be part of the solution.
- How closely is illiteracy tied to crime and juvenile delinquency? Tests show that 42% of inmates suffer from untreated learning deficiencies. Inability to perform in school leads to poor jobs, low-self esteem and escape into drugs and alcohol. Will remedial education help?
- Ninety percent of jail populations exhibit substance abuse that has never been treated. The use of drugs and alcohol interferes markedly with school performance. What can communities and schools do to address these problems before frustration turns into criminal acts?
- What does illiteracy cost businesses? What are ways workers use to escape detection of their skill deficiencies?

RADIO

Audrey Coleman
Readers Radio, Culver City (CA)
1987
"Literacy Series"

Coleman entered a series of five stories commissioned by Project Literacy U.S. and aired on National Public Radio stations during 1987.

- THE BLACK COMMUNITY: ASSAULT ON ILLITERACY PROGRAM (AOIP), SOUTH LOS ANGELES. The program describes this South Los Angeles program and how it focuses on building the self-image of elementary school students. Youngsters read to each other and work individually with trained community volunteers. The main learning vehicle is The Advancer, an educational supplement published by black communitty newspapers.

- MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS: WATSONVILLE (CA) PUBLIC LIBRARY. El Puente (The Bridge) is a bilingual literacy program that was federally funded in 1985 for a year. It continues as a volunteer-run project. The program stresses a technique which teaches people not only to read and speak in English but to view their environment critically.

- RURAL WOMEN: GREEN COUNTY, KENTUCKY. This program examines ways of helping rural Kentucky women who had little opportunity to attend school as children. The Kentucky Educational TV station offers video classes and a hot line for those needing remedial tutoring.

- INFLUENCE OF PAULO FREIRE: AMERICAN READING COUNCIL (NEW YORK CITY). Paulo Freire's techniques developed for emerging countries are the basis for the ARC program. Classes of adults begin with discussions of their problems and concerns. Compositions are written and read and then are used for teaching phonics, grammar and writing clarity.

- LITERACY AS MINISTRY: THE ROLE OF CHURCHES (PHILADELPHIA). Churches are becoming involved in the fight for literacy by furnishing housing for programs, recruiting volunteers among their parishioners and training tutors. This radio program includes a discussion by ministers, experts and volunteers on possible harm to students by missionary or paternalistic attitudes of some churches.